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PARISH SERMONS

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BY

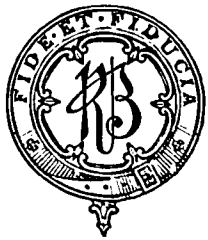
WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D. F.R.S.

LATE DEAN OF CHICHESTER

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PREFACE.

WHEN the Author of these sermons was vicar of Leeds, it was the general custom amongst clergymen of the Church of England to preach written sermons. What is called "extempore preaching" was little practised, and, indeed, by the congregations, as a rule, it was not desired. There was, and perhaps there still exists, among educated persons, the suspicion that those who are gifted with, or have acquired, great readiness in speaking, yield too frequently to the temptation of not sufficiently preparing their discourses, and of trusting to their own powers on the spur of the moment. No such charge could have been laid at the door of the vicar of Leeds, for whether he preached "extempore," which was of rare

occurrence, or from manuscript, he was, to use an old expression, "a most painful preacher."

In the midst of his manifold duties, and his constant correspondence on the questions of the day, however much engaged in parochial or literary work, while ever ready to give his attention and assistance to all who came to him for advice—and their name was legion,—he always regarded his sermons as his most important work, and to them gave the best of his abilities. In order that he might do so, he was wont to rise in the morning as early as four o'clock, so as to have some hours for quiet preparation and thought before the usual toil and turmoil of the day.[1]

He never, when vicar of Leeds, preached the same sermon twice. He would, indeed, take the same subject, and work it on the same lines, but he always re-wrote and altered the

[1] Stephens' *Life and Letters of Walter Farquhar Hook* (Bentley), vol. ii. p. 217.

details, or added to them, as occasion might require.

As the great master-painters were wont to depict their subjects over and over again, striving after perfection, so did he with regard to his sermons; and he used to say that to Bishop Beveridge's assertion, "that a sermon could not be well delivered until it had been preached many times," he would add, that it should be also as many times re-considered and re-written.

The sermon, "Hear the Church,"[1] which at one time made considerable sensation, had been preached twice—at Birmingham and at Coventry—before it was delivered in the presence of Her Majesty the Queen, but on each occasion, though it was the same in idea, it was different in detail.

Of the sermon, "The Ribband of Blue," there are three copies, all varying in the

[1] "The Church and her ordinances" (Bentley), vol. i. p. 40.

working out of the subject, and I have had to choose that which seems most perfect. The same may be said of the other sermons contained in this volume.

When he retired from his active duties as vicar of Leeds, and was appointed Dean of Chichester, Dr. Hook destroyed some 2000 manuscript sermons, and took with him only those which would be likely to be of use to him in his new sphere. From that time he gave himself up more especially to literary work, and the result was the *Lives of the Archbishops*—the child of his old age.

He wrote some sermons at Chichester, but, as a rule, preached those which he had by him. But he altered them a great deal, and hence very often there is considerable difficulty in reading the manuscript. Moreover, he used frequently to take out the beginning and the ending, cutting off, as it were, the head and the tail, and leaving the body. His reason

for doing this it is not difficult to see, but the fact is mentioned, because those who remember his beautiful perorations to the sermons in the parish church of Leeds may be disappointed, and may suppose that sufficient care has not been taken to give the sermons in their integrity.

While these sermons may be said fairly to exemplify the style of the preacher, they will fail to produce an impression on the mind of the reader, at all corresponding to that which was produced on all who heard him. Those who attended the parish church at Leeds will not readily forget the charm effected by the grand delivery, and the magnificent round voice—powerful in its appeal, and sympathetic in its tenderness.

W. H.

PORLOCK, 1879.

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THE RIBBAND OF BLUE.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue: and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord, and do them.

Numbers xv. 37, 38, 39.

A ribband of blue! A commandment of the living God, touching the fringe upon the borders of a garment, concerning the insertion of a ribband of blue!

Yes, my brethren, we have read this Scripture, and in reading let us be reminded of that wonderful and blessed fact, that He with whom we have to do can descend from the highest to the lowliest of things. While everything is within the grasp of His omnipotence, nothing can escape His omniscience; even the sparrow

on the housetop is sustained in life by Him who directs the stars in their courses and wields the destinies of the universe. Nothing is too great for His power, nothing so minute as to escape His care.

He it was who, when founding the most wonderful empire upon earth that world ever saw, condescended, in the directions which He gave, to issue His commandment concerning the ribband of blue.

That there was some wise purpose, some object, designed in this commandment, that it was no mere arbitrary and meaningless regulation, is at once admitted when we say that it was a commandment of God.

Let us, in the first place, consider the nature and object of the injunction. To ascertain this we have not far to go, since it is stated in the passage before us :—"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel and bid them that . . . they put upon the fringe of the borders of their garments a ribband of blue, and it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it and remem-

ber all the commandments of the Lord, to do them."

The object of the injunction was that the Israelites might be constantly reminded of all the commandments of the Lord to do them. But then comes the question, Why should looking upon a ribband of blue have a tendency to remind the Israelites of the commandments of the Lord? why should this particular colour be selected?

And to answer this question we must remember the high estimation in which purple or blue was held by the ancients, in the Gentile world as well as among the Israelites. So early as the days of Homer we find kings arrayed in purple, and the connection of purple with royalty is not even yet obsolete: we still read of persons born in the purple, that is, of princes born after their father has ascended the seat of empire; the origin of this being, that a king of Tyre—to whom the discovery of that beautiful dye, manufactured from the juices of certain shell-fish on the coast of Tyre, was first communicated—restricted the use of

it, by law, to the royal garments. The blue, which in Scripture we generally find associated with purple of the deepest and darkest dye, was a colour always connected in the minds of the ancients with sovereign pomp and splendour.

We do not, therefore, marvel at the application of purple or blue to the services of religion on the part of the Hebrews, for they were instructed to dedicate to the service of their God whatever was the best of its kind. To God, who gives all, the best gifts should be returned.

Accordingly we find the colours of purple and blue employed on the curtains and the veil of the Tabernacle; the robe of the high priest's ephod was all of blue;[1] the loops to the curtains of the Tabernacle were all of blue;[2] the ribband for the high priest's breastplate,[3] and for the plate of his mitre[4] was blue.

Thus blue became a sacred colour, and because of the association of ideas it was the colour selected for that part of the dress of the

[1] Exodus, xxviii. 31. [2] *Ibid.* xxvi. 4. [3] *Ibid.* xxviii. 28.
[4] *Ibid.* xxviii. 37.

Israelite which was intended to remind him of the commandments of his God.

The ribband of blue was designed to remind the Israelite that he was one of the elect people of God—not more elect than a Christian to glory hereafter, but elected to privileges upon earth, and to glory hereafter, on the condition that these privileges, of which the ribband of blue was to remind him, were duly used. He was to be reminded by the ribband of blue to conduct himself in all companies in a manner becoming a child of God; to act as an Israelite indeed, and without guile. In his business and in his amusements, among his countrymen or abroad, in society or in solitude, in the house or in the market-place, buying or selling, commanding or serving, reading or conversing, the ribband of blue was intended to remind him of his vows and his profession, of his privileges and his responsibilities, of his duty to God, in the performance of which our duty towards our neighbour is involved.

But now let us pass on to observe the principle which this injunction involves, and we

commence with reminding you that although we are not under the Law but under the Gospel, the study of the divine Law is, nevertheless, our duty if we wish to please God, and are sincere in our desire to know, in order that we may perform, His will.

In the early periods of the human race, when our race was, as it were, in its boyhood, men were governed as we govern boys—laws were made and obedience was enacted by the fear of punishment.

Under the Christian dispensation principles are given for our guidance; and then, to enable us to carry out our principles, we are to exercise our reason to frame laws for ourselves.

These laws are framed either collectively, as by the Church for the direction of its members, or individually, for the purpose of meeting the idiosyncrasies of individual character.

Take, for example, the regulations made for public worship.

We have the general principle—order, decency, reverence; this is what we obtain from Scripture.

Then the Church makes its laws in order that her members associated in certain localities may comport themselves in an orderly, decent, and reverential manner.

He who wilfully neglects the regulations thus laid down by public authority offends against God, not because the particulars have been commanded by God, but because he violates a divine principle, behaving indecently, disorderly, and without reverence.

Then, again, take an example as to individual conduct.

It is a principle enforced in Scripture that we lead, not only a godly and righteous, but also a sober life.

There is no commandment to abstain from wine, and when men try to force abstinence upon others they act tyranically; they try to bring us back under the Law; they introduce the temper of the Inquisition. But if a man finds that he has a great inclination to indulge to excess in strong drink or in anything else,—if he is aware that, in his own case, abstinence is easier than temperance,—then it becomes his

duty to bind himself by a law of abstinence. He may unite with others conscious of a similar weakness of character to give the law force, so far as it bears upon himself and his associates, but not in its relation to others, who are to use the liberty wherewith Christ has made them free.

This is said to show what is meant when we say that under the Christian dispensation God gives us principles, while we ourselves are to make the laws by which they are to be carried out.

But if we desire to ascertain the principles upon which we are to act, we must study those laws which God enforced under that dispensation, when He found it necessary to bind His people by regulations of a minute and stringent character.

When a law is given by God, we are not to question but to obey.

The Israelite was bound to put upon the borders of his garment a ribband of blue, simply because his God directed him so to do.

But there is no law on this subject binding

upon us; it would, therefore, be a superstition or an affectation on our part to do what was to the Israelite a duty.

But we go to the law, that we may ascertain the principle upon which it rests, the ground of its appointment.

And in this law relating to the ribband of blue we find a principle recognised on which the Church still acts, though less now than in the earlier ages of Christianity—the principle of employing external things as emblems or symbols to remind us of moral duty or religious sentiment.

It is a principle upon which we act, almost instinctively, in our worldly affairs, each man having a way of his own in its application.

We are going, for example, to some distant place: a friend asks us to do something for him on our way; we promise; we make the promise in sincerity; we love our friend, and we wish to oblige him; and yet, conscious of our forgetfulness of character, we invent some memento, something to remind us of our promise and obligation; and—very like the rib-

band of blue—that memento often consists in some change made in some article of our dress, or in some additional ornament to the person, each one having probably some peculiar way of his own intended to remind him of a commission which, in the multifarious nature of his day's work, he might otherwise forget.

The ribband of blue was only an application of this to the purposes of religion. Man is, in the midst of his many and various occupations, so apt to forget his God; in the midst of temptations, to be so unmindful of the vow that is upon him to lead a godly, righteous, and sober life; in the midst of his very devotions, in those moments which he deliberately takes, on the Lord's Day, from his worldly occupations, and consecrates to the interests of another world, his thoughts are so inclined to wander; that the Church in her buildings and in her various forms and ceremonies has introduced emblems and symbols, to act as the ribband of blue on the garment of the Israelite; and individual Christians find these emblems or symbols of much use for the purposes for

which they are designed, and not unfrequently carry on their persons what, appearing to the world as mere ornaments, are to them mementos of duty, suggesting, in the midst of their worldly engagements, thoughts of heaven and of heavenly things.

It is on this principle that people like to dress themselves according to their station in life; up to their station, that they may be reminded to do nothing unbecoming their condition in life; not above their station, because that would be an indication of ambition or pride; nor below their station, because that would imply meanness or parsimony.

But enough has been said to show what the principle is which, influential in the Christian Church, is sanctioned by the commandment relating to the ribband of blue.

And the principle will itself be further illustrated as we proceed to remark on some of the abuses to which it is liable—and from the prevalence of which the principle has itself fallen into disrepute—the principle of making things external suggestive of holy thoughts.

The first abuse to which such things are liable is that which results from superstition.

They pass from mementos into charms; they come to be regarded by weak minds, misled by the designing, as amulets protecting the bearers from the powers of evil.

How strong was the tendency of the Jewish mind to regard even the means of grace as mere charms, we may see from the frequent warnings which occur in the prophets.

In the early Church there was a decided inclination to act upon the principle of the ribband of blue, and to carry it out to the fullest extent.

And certainly we cannot, when we think of the thing abstractedly or on Scriptural grounds, find any fault with the custom prevalent among the early Christians of crossing themselves from time to time, in order that they might be reminded that they were soldiers of the cross: their crossings were to them what the ribband of blue was to the Israelite.

The Church of England, ever moderate, to preclude our condemnation of the principle,

directs us to cross a newly-baptized person, whether infant or adult; but we are apprehensive when we see a person crossing himself at other times, because the practice, in the Middle Ages, was resorted to as a charm against evil, and is so employed now in the Church of Rome.

We are apprehensive, therefore, at the action in an English Churchman, because it either implies in him a superstitious feeling, or else it is done in affectation, and with a view of attracting attention, which proves him to be a Pharisee or hypocrite.

In like manner, who can blame the first introduction of a crucifix into a church? What more proper than to remind men in this manner of the great fact of our religion? What an incessant sermon on the fact of the atonement?

But in the Middle Ages the crucifix was abused to the purposes of superstition, and led to idolatry. Well and wisely, therefore, have our Reformers expelled it from the church.

The brazen serpent in the Temple of Jeru-

salem was a memorial, for a time, of the past mercy of Jehovah to the people of Israel; but when the people began to worship it, well and wisely was it destroyed, and regarded as Nehushtan—brass, and nothing more.

Then again, these things may, in their abuse, lead to affectation, hypocrisy, and spiritual pride: so was it in regard to the phylacteries among the Jews.

The phylacteries, like the ribband of blue, were intended as a memento; they were strips of parchment, inscribed with particular passages of Scripture, and attached to the forehead or placed near the heart, to remind the bearer of fulfilling the law with head and heart.

Yet these were not only used as charms—the name phylactery, or safeguard, meaning this,—but we know from the New Testament that the Pharisees were condemned by our Lord, not for wearing them, but for making them broad and visible so as to attract attention, and to procure for them a reputation for wisdom and piety.

What can give greater offence than to

attract attention to ourselves in matters of religion, unless it be to attempt to acquire a reputation for piety, at the easy cost of a few outward observances and regularities?

Another abuse is, that where the principle is once admitted, its application becomes so easy as to give rise in weak and silly minds to frivolities which bring disgrace upon religion itself.

In the Middle Ages there were monks who, incapable of graver studies, and oppressed by a leisure which approached to idleness, gave full play to the vagaries of fancy in these particulars.

They found a spiritual symbol in almost everything that exists: the wounded lamb, the sacred monogram, the mystical fire, the pelican, the phœnix, were employed to represent our blessed Lord; the ship was used for the Church, the palm-tree for the martyr, the eagle for the renewed Christian, and the cross was seen everywhere—in the expanded wings of the bat, in the fins of a fish, in the despised animal that bore our Lord, in trees, in flowers,

in stars, in the forms of doorways and windows, in the masts of ships, and in the soldier's sword.

Now, in these conceptions there is nothing wrong, and they may still afford interest to the antiquarian, or suggest ideas to the poet. But it is obvious to remark that, by their multiplication, the end for which they were designed is frustrated; if we desire to have something before us to remind us of our duty, it must be something marked and easily known, and it must be of infrequent occurrence.

The really serious mind is offended by these pettinesses in matters of religion, and in seeking the beautiful we like to connect it with the sublime.

These are the chief abuses to which the principle indicated in the commandment relating to the ribband of blue is liable.

But let us now, lastly, remark that we are not to condemn a principle because it may, by misapplication or excess, tend to evil.

If such were the case, there is scarcely any blessing of life which might not come under the ban of excommunication.

He who gave the commandment with reference to the ribband of blue knew how the heart of man, in its weakness not less than in its wickedness, can turn anything to evil; but He did not withhold the commandment upon that account, nor are we to reject the principle upon which it was grounded.

In our churches, especially, we are, on the contrary, to carry it out—the only question is how?

It is much to be regretted that the present generation should in all these matters shrink from originality, and become servile imitators of the past.

If a church is to be built, the architect, instead of being required to erect a building suitable to the liturgy of the nineteenth century, is required to imitate some building of the fourteenth century.

So in symbolical representations: it is absurd to suppose that in a busy age like this men will engage in the study of the ancient symbols and emblems.

No; and it is not to be desired. But what

we require is to apply the principle of our subject in that plain and obvious manner in which it will speak at once to the serious observer.

Most people in these days, unless blinded by prejudice, are pleased to see the church darkened by stained glass; it is to them as the ribband of blue to the Israelite; calls their thoughts from the glare; reminds them of the reverence due to Him for whose worship a church is erected.

Those who believe that baptism is a sacrament of the gospel will desire to see the font so placed as to remind us of the fact when we enter the house of God. It is the ribband of blue.

Those who regard the Lord's Supper as the distinguishing rite of our holy religion will desire to see the Lord's table decently adorned, standing out as a memento of their Lord's last command—"This do in remembrance of Me."

Those who remember that faith cometh by hearing would desire men to be reminded that preaching is a sacred ordinance by the decent adornment of the pulpit.

And the arrangement of texts upon our walls, in an age when all men are taught to read, are of service, when the fanciful images to which I have alluded would fail to make an impression or to speak intelligibly to the mind.

All, in short, who believe in our Lord's promise of a special presence of the Second Person of the Godhead, where two or three are gathered together in His name, will desire to see their church adorned and decorated so as to remind men that it is the palace of Him who is not only our Prophet, as the pulpit proclaims; and our Priest, as our chancels and the holy table declare to us; but also our King.

Anything which is really suggestive, not to the mere fancy of an antiquarian, but to the mind of all who have minds capable of thought, will commend itself to the judgment, which is shocked by mere frivolities; and instead of imitating others, we should therefore use our own common sense to meet the wants of our own circumstances, created by modern manners

and education. Let us always bear in mind that the principle of the ribband of blue is, through the instrumentality of things external, to carry our thoughts to the things unseen and hoped for, and we shall then be protected from superstition, from affectation, and frivolity.

ELI AND SAMUEL.

"And he said, It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." 1 SAM. iii. 18.

WE have read in this chapter the history of the first days of Samuel, and an allusion to the latter end of Eli. Two very interesting subjects are thus brought before us. May the Spirit of the Lord be with us while we proceed to deduce instruction, first, from the fate of Eli; and, secondly, from the early training of Samuel.

I. And first of Eli. Observe his amiability and his kindness.

There is nothing more indicative of a kind and generous nature than a readiness to retract an opinion erroneously formed, and to repay by kindness a wrong unintentionally done.

It is indeed a duty which we owe to our neighbour; but then it is humiliating to flesh

and blood; and we always admire the conduct, even in little things, where self is forgotten and a duty is performed.

We admire, therefore, the conduct of Eli, when, having marked the pious enthusiasm of Hannah, the mother of Samuel, as she, attending at the sacrificial feast at Shiloh, poured out her soul before the Lord in the Tabernacle, and, having mistaken her emotions for intoxication, he had precipitately accused her of the offence, and then when, after an explanation of the circumstances of the case, he, the judge and high priest of Israel, readily retracted his opinion, and doing justice to the poor afflicted woman, changed the language of uncharitableness into that of benediction.

Here, indeed, we have an example which, I trust, my brethren, we may all of us always have grace to follow, if ever, by harsh judgments or by uncharitable language, we do wrong to another and injure our neighbour.

It was probably to this kind and amiable disposition that Eli was indebted, humanly

speaking, for his high position as the judge and high priest of Israel.

How he came to be high priest is not narrated. The office belonged of right to the representative of Eleazar's family — Eleazar being the eldest son of Aaron, whereas the family of Eli was descended from Ithamar, Aaron's younger son.

It is generally supposed that the transfer of the priesthood from the representative of the elder branch of the Aaronic family to the representative of the younger branch, was occasioned by the incapacity of the person who was the sole representative of the elder line. Be that as it may, it is certain, however, that it was not an unauthorised usurpation on the part of Eli; for his appointment to the high office was made with the divine sanction.

The easy good-nature of Eli would recommend him to the people when the vacant office was to be filled; and to the same amiable qualities we may attribute his continuance in office and the retention of his popularity, not-

withstanding the calamities which attended his administration of affairs, and which placed in danger both the Church and the country.

The same sweet disposition is to be seen in Eli's piety. What meek submission is discernible in his exclamation when, through the instrumentality of Samuel, the destruction of himself and of his father's house was predicted, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

Oh! that in all our troubles, my brethren, trusting in the special providence of our God, we may have grace to feel as well as to say, "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

An easy, calm, placable temper, is a very great blessing. For happiness to himself and —if it be attended with firmness of principle —for usefulness to others, a greater advantage to a man than that which is afforded by an imperturbable temper we can scarcely conceive.

I have said, provided it be accompanied by firmness of principle; for this, like every other

blessing, may be abused, and, like most temporal advantages, it is peculiarly liable to abuse.

A quick, fiery temper, easily excited, and irritable under small provocations, we may regard as a misfortune and a disadvantage. By such a temper, ungoverned and unchecked, a man may be driven to acts of violence, and even deeds of blood; partially restrained, it will hurry him into acts of indiscretion, and involve him in controversies and disputes.

But let such a temper be brought under the dominion of grace, and it is precisely *the* temper which creates zeal, which rouses the soul to the gracious self-denyings of noble doing for the sake of God and His truth, to a bold resistance of what is wrong, and an enthusiastic pursuit of what is good.

My brethren, it is much the same with our natural dispositions; if we be wise, we shall rest contented with the circumstances and with the dispositions which God has allotted to us severally.

In placing us under the peculiar circum-

stances under which we find ourselves, with our several tempers, dispositions, and propensities, God has exercised His sovereignty, and we should have to say, "It is the Lord: let Him do as seemeth Him good."

He, doubtless, has regard to our eternal state, our everlasting interests.

There is a mansion, an office, a calling designed for each of us in that kingdom into which we shall be introduced by death—provided we escape condemnation at the day of judgment by having the mark of Christ upon our souls.

For that office we are to be disciplined and prepared by our heavenly Father in this world; even as we ourselves discipline and prepare our children for the profession or trade for which we design them.

Circumstances, with this end in view, are allotted to us; circumstances attended with difficulties to be overcome and temptations to be resisted; circumstances, sometimes of affliction and at other times of prosperity.

And tempers and dispositions peculiar to

each are assigned to each, that by their sanctification and improvement we may be rendered meet for the employments designed for us in our eternal mansions.

Let us take the things around us, and let us take ourselves, as we find them and as we are; and seeking the grace of God's Holy Spirit through all the means of grace, let us do our duty in that state of life to which we are called, and, correcting what is amiss in us, cultivate all that is good; then we shall be laying up store for ourselves in that kingdom which has been opened to us by our dear Redeemer's blood, and an entrance into which we expect, not as a reward for our own merits, but because we are God's children, adopted in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, to whom we are united by faith.

Worldly prosperity is, in itself, an advantage. It is a false philosophy which would deny the fact; as it is a philosophy equally false which would overrate it.

But though, in itself, worldly prosperity be an advantage—to how many the possession of

it is ruin, utter ruin, misery in this world, eternal death in the world to come!

Yes, what—in itself and considered abstractedly—is an advantage, becomes, by misuse or misapplication or neglect, a positive curse.

And so it may be with a calm and placid temper.

On the one hand, zeal without love, even the zeal which would compass heaven and earth to make a single proselyte, is a sin; and on the other hand, an easy, calm, and gentle temper may become equally sinful when it subsides into indifference, and becomes impotent to resist evil.

We can easily imagine Eli, the great high priest and judge of Israel, calmly pursuing his daily routine of duty, uttering benevolent speeches to those around him, accessible to all, seeking to please every one, popular, accepting the praise which unchastised error is ever willing to pay to presiding indolence, without compensation for the past, without fear for the future, self-complacent.

And yet, under the government of this self-

complacent popular old man, the country suffered defeat, the defences were unguarded, the offices of religion were carelessly performed, the very grossest immorality prevailed, excesses were committed, the people were wronged, the chiefs among the priesthood, regardless of principle, were appetent of gain, and merciless in their endeavours to exact more than their due; and in all this the leaders and the chief offenders were the sons of Eli. In nothing is the impotence of Eli's character and government more visible than in his address to his unworthy sons, "And he said unto them, Why do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If a man sin against another, the judge shall judge him: but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?"[1]

Now here we see the piety of the good old man. He was sound in his principles; he could preach the words of truth.

[1] 1 Sam. ii. 23, 24, 25.

But how did he act? His sons sinned against man as well as against God. Eli was the judge. By his own showing the judge was to judge them; but the weak-minded judge was content with saying, "Nay, my sons; but it is no good report that I hear."

If he were too weak to act as a judge in Israel, and as the high priest ought to have acted, he should have sought to be released from his office. We have no right to accept an office and then, to gratify our own weakness or indolence, to shrink from the performance of its painful duties—to enjoy the emoluments, and yet not to do what the office demands at our hands.

Still better had it been if he had prayed to God for strength; but we may pray in vain unless we, at the same time, exert ourselves to effect the object of our prayer; and Eli, conscious of unresisted weakness, instead of praying, let things take their course.

And in the course of things he found his punishment, as, my brethren, we generally do.

We can generally trace any difficulties in

which we are involved to our own past conduct, not merely to our sins, but to our weaknesses and failures. It was so with respect to Eli, but the supreme Governor of the universe would not permit him or the people to infer that this was merely casual.

Eli had offended against God as well as man, as we always do when we neglect the duty of our station in life, whether high or low; and God caused it to be announced to him that events should be so ordered that, while conducing to the ultimate objects of God Himself, they should be also made subservient to the punishment of Eli.

Several years passed away without the apparent fulfilment of the denunciation, but it came at last in one terrible crash, by which the old man's heart was broken.

The Philistines, owing to the weakness of the domestic government under Eli, had gained the upper hand over Israel, and Israel was smitten before the Philistines.

It is an affecting scene which is presented to the mind—the last sad scene of Eli's life.

While the battle is waging the old man sits by the wayside in Shiloh, anxiously awaiting the tidings from the battlefield, for his heart trembled for the ark of God, which the Israelites had carried with them to the war.

A messenger is seen in the distance; as he approaches it is seen that his clothes are rent, and earth is upon his head; he is a messenger of sad tidings, a harbinger of defeat.

Fatal news he had indeed to tell. The sons of Eli were dead. Brave men, though bad, they were slain defending the ark.

But the ark, the ark itself, had been captured by the Philistines.

The ark which, from the days of Moses, had always been the witness of Israel's triumphs; the ark, that symbol of Jehovah's favour,—it was captured; the favour of Jehovah was withdrawn. This was the end of Eli's episcopate of Israel.

The word was scarcely uttered when the old man fell heavily from his seat and died.

And here, my brethren, observe the mercy, the loving-kindness of God.

Eli was a good man, a pious man, but he was weak and indolent, and, in consequence, he did not discharge with vigour the duties of an office, which he might have declined, and the emoluments of which he enjoyed; the further consequence being a great detriment to the public affairs of the Church and nation over which he presided.

Was he to escape punishment for this?

There was One interceding for him, saying, with reference to eternity, Father, forgive him, he knoweth not what he doeth—even the Messiah, to whose coming he looked forward, even He who became the Lord Jesus Christ, on whose cross and passion and never-ceasing intercession we ourselves rely.

Eli was to be punished, but if he was to be pardoned hereafter, his punishment must take place in this life.

And in this life he met with the punishment he deserved; he sacrificed his duty for the sake of peace, and notwithstanding his sacrifice he found trouble. He was troubled by the conduct of his sons; troubled by the disturbances to

which their ill conduct gave rise; troubled to see Israel weak and Philistines waxing strong; and having doubtless anticipated an old age of honour and of peace, his grey hairs were brought in sorrow and disgrace to the grave.

How merciful, my brethren, may be to us the severest dispensations under which we may be placed! Let us ever bear this in mind, and then, when most afflicted, we shall be able to give God thanks.

We may not always be able to see how our present disappointments, cares, troubles, sufferings, and sorrows, are the consequence of our sins or weaknesses and follies.

But we can believe, my brethren, if we have faith in a God of mercy and a loving Saviour, that what we are suffering here may be designed to prevent our suffering hereafter, and, therefore, our suffering may be ministering to a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Our very weaknesses and errors must be attended, more or less, with evil consequences. We must not expect to escape these consequences because we are pardoned; we may be

pardoned for Christ's sake hereafter, but the pardon of sin will not avert the consequences of weakness or of folly.

In the blood of Christ we have an atonement for our sins, in His righteousness a justification for our souls, in His Spirit a sanctification of our natures, in His grace an infallible support, in His merits an everlasting reward; but still we may be weary and heavy laden.

And when we are weary and heavy laden, we are invited to come to Christ. His Spirit will be to us a comforter; but our need of comfort to the last implies that to the last we may be weary, and that we may have loads of suffering to support, even after the burden of sin has been removed and our souls cleansed by the blood of the atonement.

II. And now we must advert to the early years of Samuel.

"The word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision."

Under the Levitical dispensation and before the sacred volume was completed, the will of God was revealed in ways which we should

now call miraculous, and very frequently this was done by visions presented to the inspired mind of a prophet.

There is no open vision under the Christian dispensation.

The privilege of our dispensation is, that the Holy Spirit makes an impression upon our souls, and writes the law of God in our hearts.

But now, as formerly, if we would find the Lord we may be sure of this, that we shall only do so when we are carefully discharging the duties of our station in life.

By performing the duties of our station, we are preparing ourselves better for the ordinances of religion than we should do by long courses of prayer.

Eli was not performing the duties of his station with that vigour and devotion which his high position demanded. To Eli, therefore, high in office though he was, no direct communications were made by God.

These communications were addressed to a young man of Eli's household. Young as he was, Samuel was appointed to admonish Eli.

The meek manner in which Eli received the communication which Samuel had to make,—"It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good,"—clearly shows that, notwithstanding that defect of character which led to his bodily affliction, his heart was right and his faith was sound.

And we, my brethren, should learn from this to be prepared to receive, with meekness, the message of the Lord, whoever may be the messenger, even as the young, when clearly commissioned by God to speak, may learn from Samuel's conduct the modesty and reluctance with which they should utter anything that seems to savour of disrespect to an elder.

But the question now before us is, why Samuel should have been selected to receive the word of the Lord and this open vision.

We have seen that this privilege was withheld from Eli, because good, pious, and amiable as he was, he was not discharging with vigour the duties of his office, or meeting with firmness the responsibilities he had incurred.

We may presume that there was no other

person in all the high priest's establishment,—which comprised both a palace for statesmen and a college for young ecclesiastics—a school of the prophets—who was conscientiously doing his duty in his station of life, except young Samuel himself.

It is mentioned expressly of Samuel that he "ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod."

It was a humble office that he now held, but he endeavoured to discharge its duties with all his might.

He attended not only to the duties but even to the decencies of his office, and this, too, at a period when the proprieties as well as the requirements of the highest office were, through the carelessness of Eli, neglected. Samuel, young as he was, seems alone to have been conscientiously doing his duty; and among the revealed dealings of God to man we find this to have been a general rule, that God selected as His immediate agents persons who had been previously prepared by moral discipline for the work for which He designed them.

Here we come to another and very important question, How came Samuel to be thus prepared?

Something is to be attributed to himself. His mother, indeed, had vowed a vow before his birth that she would dedicate him to the service of God. But he, when brought to the high priest's house, might have refused to stay; he might have rebelled against his destiny, or, being in the household of Eli, he might have become as Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli.

But although something depended upon himself, yet in some things he was also dependent upon others.

It was Hannah who brought him to the house of the Lord when he was yet young; his piety, though an acquisition, was also an inheritance. He was supported by her prayers as well as his own; her precept and example had influence over him; he was indebted to Eli also. We have in the chapter before us a striking instance of his deference to Eli, and of Eli's readiness to instruct him what to do.

My brethren, what an example is here to

parents! How much we are—any of us—indebted to a father's instruction and the influence of a dear mother's love, we do not know.

We all owe something—something to our parents, something to our instructors, something to our friends and associates. We know not how much, but something.

We are always intentionally or unconsciously helping or hindering one another. We cannot help it. Man, from his very birth, is linked to man.

Except for a nurse's care, we should not have escaped the perils of infancy, and when our career is finished, we shall be consigned to the grave by others. Throughout life it is the same. Others cannot do *everything* for us: we must exert ourselves, and without help from others we can succeed in nothing.

And what is a fact in the kingdom of nature is a fact also in the kingdom of grace.

We help one another by mutual prayer; how or why we know not. The fact we know.

By our actions we help one another; by

our prayers we are to help one another; and when God interferes to benefit or to warn us, He generally does so through the instrumentality of our fellow-creatures.

And this, my brethren, we are always to have in mind, whatever our station and condition in life may be.

No one liveth unto himself. And the pious man inquires, How am I, taking the circumstances under which I am placed into consideration, how am I to promote the glory of God, and to benefit those whom God has brought nigh to me, and made my neighbours?

The sin of Eli consisted in his not asking or not answering this question. He took his ease, and let other things take their course.

This was the sin of indolence, the result of an easy temper.

But there is a sin the very opposite of this, which is also to be deprecated and denounced.

We have alluded to it before. It is that zeal, resulting from an ardent temperament, which is so anxious to be doing, that, aiming

at good ends, it becomes careless of the means to be employed.

It was the zeal of the Israelites when they determined to have the Ark with them in the battlefield, without having first ascertained the will of God upon the subject.

These are the men who in these days take it upon them to do whatever they think right, regardless of precedents, rules, or authority, provided they can obtain the world's applause, or effect what they regard as a righteous end.

God does not require man's help. And woe be to man if he works forgetful that he is to work not in his own way, but in God's.

We shall do our work in God's way, if we each of us do diligently the work apportioned to us in the station of life to which God has called us, always remembering that this is to be done so as to allow both mind and time for the positive duties of religion, and especially for meditation upon the great facts of our religion, when, to satisfy justice, while saving man, the eternal Son of the Father took our nature

upon Him, and made atonement for sin by the sacrifice of the cross.

When, for His sake, we ask the Father for the gracious influences of His Holy Spirit, our question will be, not How can I be most useful? but—What is my duty?

Our duty, under given circumstances, we must endeavour to perform; and then, as for events, we leave them to God, being ever ready to say, "It is the Lord: let Him do as seemeth Him good."

SAUL.

"The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul."
1 Sam. xvi. 14.

The history of Saul, king of Israel, must always be read with feelings of painful interest, for we cannot fail to reflect that there have been others, and are so still, who, like him, having "been exalted unto heaven, have been brought down to hell."[1]

In order that we may derive some portion of the instruction which such a history is calculated to convey to the thoughtful mind, I propose to consider—

I. First, the natural character of Saul;

II. Secondly, the nature of his trial;

III. And, thirdly, the warning held out to us by his fall and future condemnation.

May He who hath vouchsafed to call us to a knowledge of His grace and faith in Him, be with us to increase that knowledge, and to confirm that faith in us now and evermore.

[1] St. Matt. xi. 23.

I. And first we must observe that Saul stands before us as one of the highest and finest specimens of the natural man.

We see him with his commanding figure a choice young man and a goodly. Among the children of Israel there was not a goodlier person than he.

We see him an affectionate son, equally careful to recover his father's property and to spare his father's feelings. We see him modest, for what indeed could be more modest than his exclamation when it was announced to him that he was designated to the throne of Israel, "Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel? and my family the least of the families of Benjamin? wherefore then speakest thou to me?"[1]

His magnanimity was evinced by his conduct to those sons of Belial who, after his appointment, despised his person and refused to acknowledge his sovereignty.

He was, to the last, a man of valour, and he was not merely a brave soldier, but in the

[1] 1 Sam. ix. 21.

relief of Jabesh Gilead he displayed the forethought and genius of a consummate general.

There must have been something attractive and attaching in the character of a young man who so early excited and so long retained the paternal affection of the prophet Samuel, whom, in point of fact, he displaced.

Such, then, was Saul, regarded as a natural man, that is to say, a man without the grace of God.

That we are to regard him in this light up to a certain period of his history is clear, for the exclamation of surprise which was uttered by his contemporaries when they saw him associated with the servants of the Lord, and taking a prominent part in the offices of religion, is recorded, to suggest to us that, whatever were his natural advantages, he had, up to that time, been living without God in the world. "What is this that is come to the son of Kish? Is Saul among the prophets?"[1] Who could have supposed it possible, judging from his antecedents?

But it was so.

[1] 1 Sam. x. 11.

What the natural man had lost through the fall, that was now restored to Saul. Samuel said unto him—"The Spirit of the Lord shall come upon thee . . . and thou shalt be turned into *another* man. And let it be, when these signs are come unto thee, that thou do as occasion serve thee; for God is with thee. . . . And it was so, that when Saul turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him *another* heart: and all those signs came to pass that day. And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him, and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them."[1]

We may not bend the words of Scripture to make them conformable to our own theological systems and preconceived opinions, we must take them as they are; and there are no words to describe a regenerated man and a man under the special grace of God, if these things are not to be predicated of Saul, king of Israel.

And yet of this man we read that he fell, and fell finally from grace once given; he grieved and did despite unto, and quenched the Spirit

[1] 1 Sam. x. 6, 7, 9, 10.

within him, and the Spirit having departed from him, he was given up to a reprobate mind.

II. Hence it is a solemn, important, and practical question which comes before us now, namely, How was it that a man so highly and spiritually endowed as we see Saul to have been was involved in this awful calamity and curse?

Now, when we speak of a man as being under grace, we mean that his agency is upheld and influenced by the superior power of the Holy Ghost, whose preventing grace puts into his mind good desires, and whose continual help enables him to bring the same to good effect.

We here see room for temptation, not for a fall; and yet it is to the fall of one who was under grace that we trace the existence of misery in the world, and our loss of immortality.

The Protoplast[1] was, immediately after his creation, placed in a state of grace. God, we are told, planted a garden eastward in Eden,

[1] Adam,—whom divines, in their desire to suggest to the erudite through one word an argument with which they are familiar, call the Protoplast—that is, the Being first formed, and as such, presenting the model or copy to be followed by others.

and there he put the man He had formed; and with man so placed, the Spirit of God abode.

But when God created man, He created a reasonable being; and reason implies freedom of will or a self-determining power, capable of obeying or refusing to obey when the command of a superior has been issued. But this power cannot be said really to exist unless there be an opportunity for its exercise. And such opportunity can only be provided by a withdrawal, for a season and in a certain respect, of the preventing and co-operating grace of the Holy Spirit, by which withdrawal the will is left free, although the Spirit of God is still at hand to resume His dominion, if prayed to do so—the very prayer implying the submission of the human will to the divine, or the resistance of the temptation to disobey.

This was the trial to which Adam was subjected. Distinguished from the brute creation by the gift of reason, his appetite for knowledge was strong, and on this a restraint was to be placed. He was directed to abide the Lord's time for the gradual acquisition of that

which he desired to possess, but he was left free to determine for himself whether he would obey the Lord or not, whether he would or would not bend the human will to the divine; and the opportunity being provided, we know the consequence, and how the Holy Spirit departed from human nature.

As through the disobedience of the first Adam the Holy Spirit departed from man, so through the obedience, even unto death, of the second Adam, the Holy Spirit, under certain conditions, has returned to us.

And in alluding to the obedience of the second Adam, and the temptations of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, we find that He was subjected to a trial precisely similar to that which we have just described.

I do not allude to His first temptations; for although they were permitted to assail Him with supernatural force, we read of no bloody sweat in the wilderness, of no complaint of our Lord's soul being exceeding sorrowful even unto death. The temptations must have been painful, as every temptation, when we are

resisting it, must be; but they did not cause an agony of grief, because we are expressly told that the Lord Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Spirit, and that He was full of the Holy Ghost.

But in His last temptation, at that hour when, in His final triumph, our salvation was accomplished and Paradise was regained for man, we hear our blessed Lord exclaiming, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

In one sense the human nature of our Lord could not be forsaken by the Divinity, for in His one sacred Person the two natures are united, the divine and human, and, perfect God as well as perfect man, He never, after His incarnation, was other than what He hath condescended to be to all eternity, the God-Man. And yet, as we have heard, there *is* a sense in which our Lord spake of Himself as thus forsaken. In other words, He was undergoing in a fallen world, and therefore under aggravated circumstances, the same temptation which Adam endured in Paradise—the human will was left free, and the victory was commenced

by our Lord (though the triumph was not completed till He gave up the ghost upon the cross) when He exclaimed, "Father, not My will but Thine be done."

And although, through our Lord's intercession, man may be restored to grace, and the Spirit of the Lord exercise dominion over his heart; yet still we find that they who are under grace are subjected to a trial similar to that to which the Protoplast was exposed in Paradise. The question is still propounded—Wilt thou or wilt thou not submit thy will to the will of God? If the answer be in the affirmative, then the Holy Spirit will take full possession of the soul, and perseverance be vouchsafed to us; if in the negative, the Spirit of the Lord will depart from us.

Thus we are told that God did tempt Abraham; that is to say, He put Abraham on his trial. Of Abraham it was demanded whether, under circumstances peculiarly painful, he would bend his will to the will of God or not.

The question was to be answered not by the Holy Spirit dwelling in Abraham, and in all

other respects bringing his will into subjection to God, but by the man himself.

This is clearly shown in the blessing pronounced on his obedience—"And the angel of the Lord called to Abraham out of heaven a second time, and said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son: that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea-shore, and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies."[1]

If we refer to the history of Abraham for our *encouragement*, we go back to that of Saul for a *warning*.

His trial was similar to that of Abraham. He was a man under grace, but this did not prevent his being tried; and the question which was put to him, also, was whether he would bend his own will to that of God.

The form in which the question was put is perfectly intelligible.

[1] Gen. xxii. 15, 16.

A king of Israel was to be only the viceroy of Jehovah — Jehovah being Himself the Sovereign Ruler of the chosen people.

The question, then, virtually put to Saul, when firmly seated upon his throne, was this: Will you, or will you not, with the royal name and dignity, acknowledge the sovereignty of Jehovah? Will you, or will you not (as doth the lieutenant to an earthly king), act in subordination to Him who is King of kings and Lord of lords, whether you see the wisdom of His commands or not, whether an obedience to them conduce directly or not to advancement of your glory or to the establishment of your power?

The same question was put to David—it was, indeed, *the* question which would have forced itself upon the founder of any dynasty in Israel. And to this question, through his consistent loyalty to Jehovah, David gave answer in the affirmative, seeking always to ascertain the divine will, through the means which were appointed under the theocracy to make it known; waiting patiently the Lord's

time for the fulfilment of His promises; and giving unto Him, with a grateful heart, the glory of his successes.

And all this was precisely what Saul refused to do. When he saw the *expediency* of obedience, none was more ready than he to purchase by his obedience, as he superstitiously supposed, the support of the Lord; but obey he would not when it seemed to him that obedience would lower him in the eyes of his subjects, or degrade him in the opinion of the surrounding kings, when it would risk his character either as a sovereign or a general.

On two great occasions was this, his loyalty to Jehovah, put to the proof. His will was free, he was conscious that resistance would be useless, but he made his election; in other respects he would obey God, but here he was determined not to bend to the will of the Most High, or to occupy his throne as a vassal of Jehovah.

And—dreadful words!—"the Spirit of the Lord departed from him." He became a mere natural man, whose descent is downwards.

Down, down, down, he was soon sinking into the bottomless pit. He, whose youth was so full of promise, became peevish, unamiable, suspicious, jealous, stubborn, capricious, cruel, sacrilegious, persecuting the innocent, a terror to his family, a selfish tyrant, slaying all who, even unintentionally, thwarted his designs or opposed his will, leaving to his posterity nothing but the worst of all titles, that of being a bloody house. Forsaking God and by God forsaken, he sank into the most fearful insanity—not mere intellectual insanity, but that moral insanity, which, leaving the reasoning powers in their vigour, compels its unhappy victim, through the indulgence of his passions, to act as unreasonably as if the intellect were itself decayed; as when we see the miserable wretch who is fully aware that intemperance will be to him destruction both of body and of soul, in the impatience of his madness, lifting the poisoned chalice to his lips and imbibing damnation.

Sinking from religion to superstition, Saul resorted, in the impiety of his weakness, to

godless rites which, in the power of his intellect, he had just before condemned; and though he preserved his courage to the last, it only nerved his arm against himself; and defying the God whom he once had served, he died a miserable suicide.

Such was the end of one who had been almost a saint.

Well, indeed, might the daughters of Israel be called upon to lament for the mighty fallen; well, indeed, might the very stones of the dewless Gilboa be expected to cry out. For if there be in the dark world of woe one miserable being more miserable than another, surely it will be that man who, when on earth, came nearest to the kingdom of heaven, and then missed it from remaining almost, and not becoming altogether, a servant of the Lord.

III. This is, indeed, an awful thought to those who have been called in baptism to that state of salvation in which we pray that by grace we may continue; but from which, as that prayer implies, we may fall, and, in these days, thousands upon thousands, it is to be feared, do fall.

A new Eden the Lord hath, indeed, planted upon earth, and He hath stored it with heavenly blessings. In it stands the tree of life, or the means of grace; and to all who are, by the election of God, placed within it, the question comes, though in another shape, as it did to Adam, to Abraham, and to Saul,—Will you bend your will to the will of God?

And how does it come?

The ordinary temptations of life are incident to our fallen condition; they are necessary to discipline and prepare us for our eternal state. And when we are under grace they can be resisted with comparative ease, for greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world.

Therefore it is that we are enjoined, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."[1] And again: "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life,

[1] St. James i. 2, 3.

which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him."[1]

The Apostle speaks of a sin which easily besets them—the sin which readily comes to them, which stands around them, which encircles them—that is, a temptation to which we are peculiarly open.

Now the only reason why a man under grace can be more open to one temptation than another is this—that here the constraining influence of the Holy Spirit, which renders us triumphant over other temptations, is for a season withdrawn, and withdrawn on the principle before advanced, that our will may be tried. Here our will is left free.

If we have overcome, or are resolutely resisting, which is nearly the same thing, our besetting sin, then will the Spirit of the Lord resume His dominion over us; when our spirit is weary refreshing it, warming the heart when it is cold, comforting it when sorrowful; when the soul cleaves to the dust quickening it and raising it to heaven; enabling us to rely on the

[1] St. James i. 12.

blood and righteousness of Christ for pardon, and to do all things and endure all things for His sake.

Depend upon it, my brethren, if these blessings are not realised to your soul, if you resort in vain to the means of grace, and if your prayers be hindered, the hindrance of your prayers and the frustration of your hopes are to be traced to your not resisting the sin which easily besets you.

It is against our being permitted to be again tempted in this respect that we pray, adding to our prayer another petition, that we may be delivered from the evil one, who will involve us in these temptations if he can. But we pray in vain unless we exert ourselves. Therefore watch as well as pray. Your besetting sin, what is it? What is the weak point in your character? What is your special weakness? What is your evil propensity? Is there any inordinate passion? What is your peculiarity of temper?

It is through your besetting sin, whatever it may be, that the question is asked of you—

Wilt thou or wilt thou not yield to the will of God? Here is thy peculiar trial; this thy single combat; here thy hand-to-hand fight with the great enemy of souls in the world's battlefield.

And we must beware, "lest Satan should get an advantage over us: for we are not ignorant of his devices."[1]

He who tempted Eve and ruined Saul is still prompt with his suggestions, and his sophistry has able advocates in the world.

The real question put to our first parents and to Saul was whether the human will could submit to the divine will.

And a question more momentous it is impossible to conceive.

But they who have yielded to the inspirations of Satan represent the offence as trivial, and the punishment as incredibly excessive. And with the same craft he would now persuade men that the sin which doth most easily beset them is just *the* sin in which they may with safety indulge; because, he says, it is *the* sin for which most allowance is to be made. He

[1] 2 Cor. ii. 11.

thus seeks to put us off our guard on that very point upon which vigilance is required most.

One commandment is transgressed; "Yea, but," saith Satan—applying an opiate to the conscience—"the other nine are kept; ye shall not surely die for one offence, in your case a little offence, because the temptation is strong and you are weak."

What means the expression we so often hear, that a man who is dying of his iniquities is no one's enemy but his own? What means the expression, Such a one is to be pitied, for he was a man of only one fault?—or, "he is, to be sure, a drunkard, a fornicator, an adulterer"—or, "he is an unbeliever, a blasphemer, a sneering sceptic; yet how noble his conduct, how generous, how benevolent, how kind?" See him, he is a choice young man and a goodly; from his shoulders and upward he is higher than any of the people. So was Saul, king of Israel, described; and what was his end? "So Saul died for his transgression which he had committed against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking

counsel of one who had a familiar spirit, to inquire of it; and inquired not of the Lord: therefore the Lord slew him."[1]

My brethren, again I say, Beware of the devices of Satan. When Saul ceased to be religious, he became superstitious—and see how Satan strives to pervert religion into superstition even now.

Oh! beware of these witches of Endor. It is astonishing to think of the follies to which men will subscribe, or to the amount even of bodily pain to which they will submit, if only they may be permitted to indulge in the one little sin to which they are inclined, or if by these processes they can shut their eyes to its existence.

Beware, I repeat it, of the devices of Satan. He suggests that the besetting sin may be indulged for a season—he is a procrastinator, paving hell with good intentions. Look to Saul: he outlived the day of grace; he was given up to a reprobate mind; he remained for a time on earth, a time to be employed for

[1] 1 Chron. x. 13.

the purposes of Providence, like any inanimate thing; but he himself, in the midst of spiritual life, was dead.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." To-morrow?, why to-morrow, thou mayest be dead in trespasses and sins.

You say perhaps that you are weak: true, my brethren, most true. This is admitted when we speak of a besetting sin: you are weak—very weak—but there is at hand a Saviour mighty to save. He, the everlasting Son of the Father, He who became man, that by His atoning blood He might restore man to life; He, the Lord Jesus Christ; He who, when on earth, never cast out any that came unto Him; He who never sent any one, unhealed, away from Him; He, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; He is nigh unto thee, ever able, ever willing to save.

To Him the man came who had a withered hand; to Him was brought the sick of the palsy. Are you spiritually more helpless than they were bodily?

He healed *them*, and He is at hand to

strengthen you. But mark, my brethren, He said to the man with a withered hand, "Stretch forth thy hand." He said to the sick of palsy, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk."

They did not say, Lord, we are unable to do as Thou commandest, for we are weak; they made the attempt, and in making the attempt the strength came, and they gave the glory to God.

So, my brethren, let us be resolute in resisting our besetting sin, and the strength will come. In spiritual things the movements are slow; in a prolonged struggle we may be subjected to occasional falls and failures, but if our deliberate purpose, our fixed determination, be to resist and overcome our besetting sin, whatever that sin may be, we are fighting then the good fight; the Captain of our salvation is then at hand to support us, to protect us, to conduct us, to recall us, to fortify us, whenever we call unto Him for help; and when the victory is won the grace of perseverance will be imparted, and the Spirit of the Lord will depart from us—never.

RIZPAH, THE DAUGHTER OF AIAH.

"And Rizpah the daughter of Aiah took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of harvest until water dropped upon them out of heaven, and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night.

2 SAM. xxi. 10.

THE history of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, and a consideration of the events recorded may, by the blessing of God, suggest some thoughts applicable to the circumstances of those here assembled.

We will direct our attention—

In the first place, to the divine dealings with the house of Saul and the people Israel;

In the second place, to the conduct of Rizpah;

And in the third place, to the conduct of David.

May the Spirit of the Lord be with us.

I. We must commence our first head by

reminding you who the Gibeonites were, and for this purpose we must refer to an episode in the history of Joshua.

Joshua, having passed the Jordan, had conquered Jericho and taken Ai, when a tribe of the Amalekites took the alarm, and determined, if possible, to make a league of friendship with the conqueror and his people.

They were aware that the Israelites were prohibited by their God from making any alliance with the Canaanites, and therefore they had recourse to a stratagem.

Their ambassadors appeared before the fortified camp of the Israelites at Gilgal; they denied that they were Canaanites, and pretended that they had come from a distance.

Joshua and the princes of the congregation were deceived by their representations, and made with the Gibeonites a national league and compact.

When it was, soon after, discovered that the Gibeonites were their neighbours and dwelt in the midst of them, they still refused to violate the national faith. The Gibeonites were per-

mitted to dwell in the midst of Israel, and to retain possession of their lands and cities; only, as a just punishment for their deceit, they were compelled to serve the Tabernacle as hewers of wood and drawers of water.

The Israelites, thus deprived of the spoil of the Gibeonites, were indignant at the conduct of Joshua and the princes of the congregation, and the ill-feeling was inherited by their children. The Gibeonites were treated by the Israelites as our Saxon ancestors by their Norman conquerors, and any act of injustice or hostility against them was sure to be attended with popular approbation and applause.

When Saul was unexpectedly raised to the throne, his first object was to establish his dynasty by the acts usually resorted to by unscrupulous despots.

His object was to attach his courtiers to himself by the liberality of his donations, and to enrich his family.

And his private property being small, he seems to have availed himself of every opportunity to rob the Gibeonites.

We know not how else he could have conferred, as he certainly did, fields and vineyards on the Benjamites, the men of his tribe, as well as upon the members of his own house.

Full license in this respect seems to have been given to his captains of thousands and captains of hundreds, so that his reign was one long persecution of the Gibeonites.

And the people looked on approvingly.

Here was the sin of the monarch, his family, his people.

It was to all appearance a successful act of kingcraft.

But time passed on. Saul died in battle. David ascended the throne. The thirty-fourth year of his reign arrived. A famine prevailed over the land. Three years the famine lasted.

Why, it has been asked, did not David inquire of the Lord at once?

A little consideration supplies us with the answer.

Although there were means under the Levitical dispensation of obtaining a response from the divine oracle, this was not to be resorted

to upon ordinary occasions, or to solve every doubt or difficulty which might occur.

Human means were to be adopted then as now, and the human intellect was to be exercised, before recourse was had to that which was, for a season, to be an occasional assistance to a people selected from the mass of mankind to perform an office under the special presidence of God.

There appeared to be nothing out of the common course of things, when, after the commotions which had recently occurred in the country, and the partial suspension of agricultural labour in consequence, a scarcity prevailed, and from the well-stored granaries of the great king there was a supply of food to the people which may have mitigated the evil for the first two years.

But things began to assume an alarming appearance when, the crops of two years having failed, the granaries were now nearly empty, when the people were clamouring for bread, and when there was no prospect of the Government being able to meet the demand.

Then the king began to think that it was some special infliction under which the people suffered, and yet he could not call to mind any great national sin of which they were at that time, in especial, guilty.

The general sinfulness of himself and his people he acknowledged and confessed, but special afflictions came in consequence not of the general sins of which all mankind are guilty, but because of some particular, definite, and discernible provocation on the part of the chosen people.

And now, in his perplexity, David felt that a case sufficiently strong had occurred to justify him in having recourse to the divine oracle, in order to ascertain the cause of the calamity with a view to its removal.

David received his answer: "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house, because he slew the Gibeonites."

The assertion of the fact implied the necessity of an expiation, and the shedding of blood could only be expiated, under the Levitical law, by the shedding of his or their blood on whom the murder was chargeable.

David had, therefore, no choice, but to deliver up the sons of Saul for execution when the execution was demanded by the Gibeonites.

The Gibeonites do not appear to have acted harshly.

They hinted that they had a charge to bring against the whole nation, by whom Saul and his bloody house had been abetted in their persecutions, but they were influenced by precautionary rather than by vindictive feelings.

This is implied when they said of the sons of Saul, "We will hang them up before the Lord in Gibeah." They recognised the interposition of the Lord in their behalf, and regarded themselves as instruments in the hands of Him who hath said: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay."

But desiring to make an example, to show to the future kings and people of Israel that the treaty with Gibeon was not to be violated with impunity, they gibbeted the bodies of the offenders at the birth-place and favourite residence of Saul.

All this is sufficiently intelligible; but what

is remarkable in the occurrence is, that so long a period should have been permitted to elapse between the commission of the crime and its penal consequences; and this, therefore, is the point upon which to fix our attention as that from which we are to derive instruction.

And here it becomes important for us to observe that a distinction is to be drawn between the consequences of an action and the punishment of a guilty agent.

The famine, in the present instance, was because Saul and his bloody house had slain the Gibeonites. It was a consequence of that act of his.

But the famine was not the punishment of Saul, the most guilty of the offenders.

It was not *the* punishment of his sons.

Of those who suffered from the famine the great majority had not been born when Saul committed his offence; and the offending generation who had applauded his acts of injustice, robbery, and murder, were most of them dead.

This is only analogous to what we are in the constant habit of beholding.

We see a man limping in his gait; we inquire into the cause, and we find the cause to have been a fall from his horse half a century ago. This is no punishment, for his fall, if an act of carelessness, was no crime.

We see a man ruined in his fortune; we find it to be in consequence of his having become security to a friend who has played him false.

We see a man wounded or maimed; it is a wound received when nobly fighting his country's battles. His suffering, in this instance, is actually in consequence of his virtue.

All this is very mysterious; we cannot account for it, but it is a mystery with which we are daily conversant. All that we can say is this, that God has constituted a certain order of things, according to which certain consequences, whether calamities or not, ensue from certain actions.

We know that as a father chasteneth his children, so our Heavenly Father scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.

But He does not always punish by the consequences of our evil actions.

Saul was punished even in this world. In spite of his elevation to the throne and his brilliant successes, he lived a miserable life and died a miserable death.

Here was his punishment, but so far as his crime to the Gibeonites was concerned, he did not live to share in the misery occasioned by that sinful act.

The consequence of that act was the famine, long after his death, and the famine was a punishment to those whom it reduced to want, but not for the sin which was the cause of the event.

But what may impress this truth more strongly on our minds is this—that even the pardon of our sins does not carry with it an exoneration from the consequences of our criminal actions.

We see a man debilitated, weak, ruined, in his constitution. He is a man of piety and integrity, leading the life of a saint; he is happy in the conviction that Christ died for sinners, and that he, a penitent, is a pardoned sinner. But his weakened constitution is in

consequence of the criminal excesses of his youth; it is the consequence of sins committed perhaps half a century ago, by one whom God, for Christ's sake, hath pardoned.

Take the case of David himself: David fell; he sinned; he sinned grievously; he repented, however; he turned to the Lord; he was pardoned; as a pardoned sinner he enjoyed that peace of God which passeth all understanding. But the consequences of his sin—these were not averted from the pardoned penitent. With the exception of Job no one ever suffered more acutely than David did during those years which occurred between the commission of his great sin and his death. Family disgrace and affliction; turmoil and rebellion in his kingdom; a laceration of the heart by the vices and rebellion of his children; insults offered to him by the most degraded of his subjects; exile from his throne and his home;—these things, and more than these, had David to endure as the consequence of his sinful action.

And surely, my brethren, the thought of

this fact, that our actions, independently of their good or evil desert, have inevitable consequences, should make us very circumspect and careful. Of our good actions, as well as of our bad, of little actions as well as of great, consequences of everlasting importance may ensue, whether as rewards or as punishments we do not always know; all that we do know being, that there exists a mysterious sequence of events which evades our research and reaches beyond the things of this world.

Upon this point there is not space to dwell. I will only, therefore, recall to your minds that this is the basis of revealed religion. The first man fell—the consequence was the ruin of our race; the second man, the Lord from heaven, obeyed even unto death—the consequence is the salvation of penitent man.

II. We pass on to the consideration of the conduct of Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, by whose conduct a peculiar interest is given to the whole transaction.

She had been a secondary wife or concubine of Saul.

Among the members of Saul's household who suffered for the sins of the family were her two sons Armoni and Mephibosheth.

We do not hear of a murmur or complaint on the part of Rizpah. She perhaps felt that the sentence was just; but however just in itself, it overwhelmed her with grief.

Against the laws of their country her sons had offended; but they had not committed a domestic offence, and from their kindred, from their mother especially, they deserved attention and respect.

That which was especially shocking to Rizpah was the exposure of her sons after death. It was an insult keenly felt.

Capital punishment among the Jews was not inflicted by hanging the criminal alive; and it is not necessary to suppose that this was done by the Gibeonites in the present instance. But after execution the Jews did sometimes hang the dead body on a tree or gibbet; and the Gibeonites, desirous of holding forth the act of justice as a warning to their enemies, determined to leave the sons of Saul

thus exposed as long as the Jewish authorities would permit.

Dreadful did it seem to Rizpah's heart that those whom she had watched with all a mother's tenderness and care should become a prey to the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. She determined to save them from the last indignity. It was to a work of difficulty and danger that she exposed herself; not only was she to drive off the bird of prey—the hyena and the jackal were the well-known scavengers of every place of death, and while they polluted the dead, they were a terror to the living.

Nevertheless, "Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, took sackcloth, and spread it for her upon the rock, from the beginning of the barley harvest," when her sons were executed, "until water dropped upon them out of heaven." They seem to have remained gibbeted until, by the fall of rain, a sign was given of returning fertility to the land. There she sat, "and suffered neither the birds of the air to rest on them by day, nor the beasts of the field by night."

What care, what solicitude, what expense!

and all incurred for what? What was the use? Where was the advantage gained?

Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, exhausting her strength in watching her dead sons, instead of attending the sick-bed of some relative who, if more remote in the relationship, would have profited by her labours, which her sons could not. Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, expending in honour of the dead what might have been sold for much and given to the poor. Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, is she to be adduced as a warning or as an example?

She did not add to her wealth by what she did, neither could she restore her children to life.

What was the use of all this?

I am sure, my brethren, I cannot give an answer to this question if an answer is not given at once by your own hearts.

Let us appeal from the judgment of the head to the judgment of the heart.

Was not Rizpah's conduct natural? And, my brethren, in yielding to the dictates of nature we shall be doing what God requires us

to do, and we may be sure that from right and natural conduct consequences will ensue, which, though not always discernible by us, will be in the end beneficial.

Rizpah, in what she did, indulged her grief; and as afflictions are sent to make us grieve, she did right.

It is by the indulgence of our grief, within certain limits, that pain is mitigated and the mental wound gradually healed.

It is one of nature's remedies.

When good comes to us we are to rejoice, and by the smile on our countenance we may show our joy. When calamity comes, we are not to say, It is useless to weep! What is the use of tears? Tears are sent to our eyes for the very purpose that they may overflow, and we may let them flow freely.

What faith requires is, not that we should not grieve, but that we should be prepared deliberately to thank God for our afflictions, under the faith that He does not willingly afflict the children of men, and that, therefore, our afflictions are intended for our real and permanent benefit.

When any one has suffered from an accident, and the surgeon announces to him that a limb must be amputated, he is full of grief; the operator puts him to pain, he weeps, he shrieks under the operation. But when he who put him to pain returns to him, he thanks him for what he has done, because, by depriving him of a limb, he has saved his life.

It is precisely on this principle that the Church in the Burial Office, without seeking to repress our tears, instructs us to thank God for taking a dear one out of the miseries of this sinful world, because faith believes that he is taken when best for him, and at the time when it is fittest for us that the short separation should take place—a parting in time, preparatory to an eternal reunion.

A heathen can submit, for he must submit. There is no merit in that. A Christian returns thanks. The heathen recognises only the inexorable will of an uncontrollable power. The Christian says, "Father, not my will but Thine be done." He knows it to be best; though the grief and the anguish may be terrible. The Lord Jesus wept.

We feel at the grave as we should feel in parting with one of our children destined to a high position, or a lucrative office in a distant colony.

With what agony of grief should we clasp our child to our bosom! and yet we wish it not otherwise. We should say, "Go, we hope to meet again in a few years," and, turning to the friend who, having conferred the appointment upon our child, has been the cause of our tears, we should bless him as a benefactor of our family. Still we might cherish our grief, by thinking of him, by looking at his portrait, by gazing upon tokens of love that he may have left behind: we should feel our loss, but at the same time we should be cherishing his memory and sustaining our love.

What Rizpah did was not without its use, if we look to the moral instead of the physical world. She returned to her home with a softened though a saddened heart, with subdued affections, with a consciousness of having done what she could, and with the knowledge that her conduct had met with the approbation of

David the Psalmist, the sweet singer of Israel, in whose songs of Zion she found, probably, in her watchings, that solace which they still afford to the sorrowing heart.

Whatever, my brethren, tends to encourage the gentle, amiable, affectionate, and devout dispositions of our nature, is of real utility, and so also is whatever tends to the civilisation of mankind. On this principle it is that we desire to put in repair the ancient fabrics of our churches. As Rizpah honoured the inanimate bodies which at one time contained the spirit of her sons, so we delight to show reverence even to dead walls, when those walls are erected into a house for our God.

III. But we are guarded against superstition by a reference to the conduct of David, which is now, lastly and simply, to come under our notice.

"And it was told David what Rizpah, the daughter of Aiah, had done. And David went and took the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son from the men of Jabesh-gilead, which had stolen them from the the street of

Beth-shan, where the Philistines had hanged them, when the Philistines had slain Saul in Gilboa: and he brought up from thence the bones of Saul and the bones of Jonathan his son; and they gathered the bones of them that were hanged. And the bones of Saul and Jonathan his son buried they in the country of Benjamin in Zelah, in the sepulchre of Kish his father: and they performed all that the king commanded. And after that God was intreated for the land."

In the generous heart of David a generous action was sure to find a ready response. He whose parental affections not even the rebellion of an ungrateful son could annihilate, knew how to sympathise with the childless Rizpah; he knew from the promptings of his own spirit how best to administer consolation to her stricken heart; and Rizpah was, doubtless, consoled, when, in a princely burial, she saw honour done to her husband's house. David was not the man to begrudge expense, when, by his expenditure, he could mitigate the sufferings of a sorrower, or do honour to his God.

But David was the very man who had caused the affliction, instrumentally, in which he so tenderly sympathised.

He could sympathise as a man. But David was also a king—a king who ruled as well as reigned; and the first duty of a ruler is to maintain justice.

Justice demanded the execution of the sentence passed on the sons of Saul, and in conforming strictly to national treaties, David knew that the moral weight of Israel among the neighbouring nations depended.

Justice first, and then mercy. This is the way of the Lord, and David as the Lord's vicegerent walked in it.

Justice was to be satisfied in the everlasting kingdom, by the atonement effected by the incarnate God Himself, ere mercy could have room to operate.

And David was aware that the mercy which is inconsistent with justice, is not a virtue but a weakness.

And with reference to our present proceedings, we gather from hence the principle that,

although the beautiful in nature, in art, and in sentiment is not to be despised, it is not to supersede our attention to the stern realities which have to do with the good and the true.

From not having this in mind, many, have in these days, made shipwreck of their faith—they have so regarded the æsthetics of religion, that in order to encourage in themselves sentiments and feelings of piety, they have forgotten the divine denunciations against idolatry, and have in their legends so mingled falsehood with truth, as to excite the suspicion of the superficial man of the world, that truth is nowhere to be found.

"'Tis first the true and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful and then the true;
First the wild moor, with rock, and reed, and pool,
Then the gay garden, rich in scent and hue.

'Tis first the good and then the beautiful,
Not first the beautiful and then the good;
First the rough seed sown in the rougher soil,
Then the sweet flower and the branching wood.

Not first the bright and after that the dark,
But first the dark and after that the bright;
First the thick cloud and then the rainbow's arc;
First the dark grave, then resurrection's light."

Let the right order be observed, and then our natural feeling for the beautiful in sentiment, as well as in nature and art, ceases to be a mere sentimentality, and becomes, as in Rizpah, a virtue.

We pass on to a higher view.

To the careless and profane, who persevere in their thoughtlessness and vice under the idle notion that God is all merciful, we are compelled to repeat the truth—"A God all mercy is a God unjust."

We are compelled to speak of Jehovah to such in His kingly character—a terrible Lord God, even a consuming fire.

But when we are awakened to repentance, and are prepared to seek God's mercy in God's appointed way, then we see God in Christ; then we think of the Lord Jesus, who in dying for sinners when penitent and faithful, died—as we may each one of us say—for me; then we see the God of justice, through the blood of the cross, become a God of mercy; and we love to contemplate Him not only in the sufferings which He endured for us in Gethsemane

and at Golgotha, but also in the softer shades of life. We contemplate him in His gentleness, His forbearance, His meekness, His ever ready sympathy, His compassion for the weaknesses of His disciples, His loving man's heart in union with His divine nature, and His kingly justice. We remember *for* whom He suffered, and *to* whom He still is all gentleness, and forbearance, and tenderness, and love; and while thus indulging our love to our loving Saviour, His Spirit will take possession of our souls, rendering us firm, like David, in the cause of justice and truth, and yet gentle, like Rizpah, in all the endearing relations of life.

DAVID, AN EXAMPLE; A BENEFACTOR; A WARNING.

"David the son of Jesse . . . the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel."—2 SAM. xxiii. 1.

IN David we have both an example and a warning.

Oh, would to God that in these days the example of King David were more explicitly followed than it is! For what was the characteristic of David? Surely, my brethren, it was loyalty to the Lord his God, loyalty to the King of kings. King though he was, never did David forget that an earthly king is only the deputy, the vicegerent, the lieutenant of Him by whom kings reign — the Sovereign Ruler of the universe; a king among men, a viceroy in the presence of Him before whom angels veil their faces.

Loyalty is love evinced towards a superior; love which induces us to do all that in us lies, as circumstances from time to time admit, in

small things or in great, to promote the glory of Him whose servants and subjects we are, and to advance the interests of His kingdom. You may not be able to do much. No. But if you are loyal Englishmen you would, if your sovereign were to appear among you, make manifest your loyalty by your shouts of welcome and by the enthusiasm with which you would sing the National Anthem. So, when you gather together in the Lord's house, where are you ? You are in the palace of the great King, where God, who is everywhere, is said to be peculiarly present—present in a peculiar manner, present as the King of kings to receive the homage of His subjects. Yes, this is the grand idea of public worship—it is the homage rendered by subjects to their heavenly King ; by subjects who at one time were traitors, but who are now loyal subjects ; who at one time were rebels, but to whom the great King has granted an amnesty through the intercession of the King's Son; subjects who unite with their fellow-subjects, not only with men of flesh and blood, but also with angels and arch-

angels and all the hosts of heaven; subjects who would worship with the whole man, with body, mind, and spirit—with the understanding and the spirit, of course, but also with the body—externally through the forms and ceremonies ordained by the Church, that our homage may be done decently and in order.

Decency and order, and much of ceremony, are observed in the court of an earthly sovereign; and in these days those only who have not realised this idea of public worship are opposed to a certain amount of ceremonial in the services of the Church. It is an age when these things receive considerable attention in secular affairs. With how much of ceremony are the daily meals attended in large households!—how vast the multitude assembled when any grand ceremonial or military display shall take place! No; it is not against our doing what the Church appoints us to do in respect to ceremonies, that sober-minded Churchmen find objection. The objection is, that instead of evincing a firm, manly, English spirit, doing neither less nor more than

their Church directs, there are presumptuous persons who try to force into the Church of England the forms and ceremonies of a Church alien to our own, and thus clandestinely to lead people on to the reception of erroneous doctrines, which it is the glory of our realm and Church at the Reformation to have repudiated. Against these proceedings by all means protest; but recollect that your protest will be the stronger if you point out that it is not against the principle, but against its abuse and misapplication that you protest; if you are careful, though not to exceed, yet not to fall short of what the Church enjoins. We are indignant when additions are made to our ceremonial, and we declare that, instead of creating in us feelings of reverence, they distract our attention: it is by making our ceremonies, though significant, yet few, that a really reverential tone has been given to our services. He is guilty of worse than folly who sacrifices the end to a superstitious attention to the means; and, through a pretence of reverence, he will really create feelings of angry disgust.

Then, again, we are to render the homage of our mind and understanding. To supply us with food for thought, it is part of the ceremonial of our Church that the mind should be addressed in lessons taken from the Bible, and by their exposition and enforcement from the pulpit.

The soul, at the same time, lays itself open to the gracious influences of God, who, in the person of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, abideth for ever, the Paraclete or chief minister in the Church of Christ, inspiring us to use with fervour the Psalms which He inspired David to indite; God the Holy Ghost, who reunites us to Christ the mediator between God and man in the one sacrament, and sustains that union in the other; these two ordinances being, on that account—on account of their uniting the faithful to the one and only Saviour—distinguished by the name of sacraments from all other means of grace. Theirs is this peculiar grace.

But although we render our homage as loyal subjects to the King of kings through

public worship; although from time to time we renew our sacrament, our vow as subjects and soldiers of the great Captain of our salvation, this is not all that spiritual loyalty demands at our hands.

Think of all that a loyal Englishman finds himself in duty bound to do: why was our population, a short time since, armed as volunteers? It was because it was supposed—happily it only remained a supposition—that an enemy was threatening to invade our coasts—our coasts, sacred to the tread of Englishmen, or the friends of England. Why are the two great political parties of this free country in such frequent collision? It is because both are loyal, though their loyalty displays itself on the one side in a fear lest we should lose advantages we have gained; on the other, that we should miss the opportunities which from time to time present themselves for enlarging our borders while we strengthen our stakes. Violently as opinions may differ, no one dares impeach in others that virtue of loyalty which every Englishman claims for himself.

And look, my brethren, to the state of Christ's kingdom. What see we? How busy is the enemy. How violently are some denying the very existence of the Saviour we adore; how craftily are others confounding creation with its Creator; how insidiously are not a few urging that all that is required is a right intention, and that it is a matter of indifference whether the Great Being you worship is the Jehovah of Christianity, the Jove of heathenism, or the holy woman, who is, in too many instances, permitted to usurp the place of the one and only human being who was without sin—His nature being sinless, because though perfect Man, He was also perfect God—our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ.

We see in many quarters a determined hostility to those institutions of our country which were by our ancestors based upon Christianity. We see men resolute in their endeavour to exclude Christianity from the education of our people. The religious sentiment in the encouragement of which Jew, Turk, infidel, and heretic will combine,—this is tolerated, but not

the truth as it is in Jesus. We see the ephemeral writers of our lighter literature cheered on by popular applause in holding up to ridicule all that is high and holy and heavenly in national thought, while they surround infidelity with a halo of sanctity, and make immorality heroic; while men sin, as it were, with a cart rope. We find Satan seeking to people hell, by leading men on to doubt of its existence.

O my brethren! there is indeed a demand now more than ever for the loyalty of Christians. To one and all the cry is, "To the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty." *How* you are to exert yourselves must depend upon circumstances; but oh! encourage in yourselves the disposition of David,—a spirit of loyalty to Jehovah; who, although He doth not stand in need of your help, who, though He must eventually triumph over His enemies and laugh them to scorn, delays the punishment of His opponents, that He may give room for the formation in our characters of that principle of loyalty which is to predominate for ever and for ever in those

who are predestined to surround the throne of glory in the triumphant church.

How this is to be done you will at once perceive if you remember what I have said or implied—that loyalty is a phase of love.

Love is at first a sentiment. When it is extended towards our fellow creatures, it becomes practical, and evinces itself in benevolence and charitable actions. Evinced towards God, it is loyalty, and is seen in the zeal with which we engage in every rational undertaking for the propagation of the gospel, —the announcement to a lost world of the blessed fact that the goodness of God has provided for us a Saviour; the proclamation that the Lord Jesus Christ is a Saviour omnipotent to save; the solemn call to all the nations of the world, and to every human creature in the same, Look unto Him—look unto Jesus, and be saved.

If then we would encourage loyalty in your hearts, we should exhort you to look first to yourselves. It is not an offence—it is a virtue —indeed a necessity, that charity should *begin*

at home; our only quarrel with any one on this score is when it not only begins but ends there.

Seek, then, by all means, in the first place, to enkindle in your souls, through prayer for the renovating influences of the Holy Ghost, love towards Him who first loved you.

Consider God as the Sovereign Ruler of the universe—not of men only, but of countless hosts dwelling in worlds unknown, to whom the works of God are made known, and who know therefore what has occurred in this planet of ours. They know that the human race has become a disobedient race; they know that the consequence of disobedience in the creature is the forfeit of the blessings of heaven, and misery—that a creature eternally disobedient must be eternally miserable; they know that when God as the Lawgiver rendered life and happiness the result of obedience, He would cease to be—which is impossible—a just judge, unless He permitted the law to have its full effect in the sequence of events, which is the misery of the offender. Die man, or justice

must!—this was, doubtless, as our poet represents it, the feeling in heaven when man transgressed and fell.

How wonderful was the display of infinite mercy when God devised the plan of redemption! The punishment of man was required, that the majesty of the one law given to all created intelligences might be upheld—the one law, 'Obey, and live,' which implies death to be the consequence of disobedience. But if the law could be magnified in some other way, then man, on his repentance, might be pardoned, without injury to all created intelligence.

And how could the law be more magnified, than by God's own obedience to it! But God, as God, could not obey or disobey; God, therefore, in the second Person in the ever-blessed Trinity, became incarnate, that, possessing a human will, He might bring that will into subjection to the Divine will. But if He was to obey, He must be tempted and tried. Satan therefore had more than ordinary power given to him, when our Lord was incarnate, to try

Him to the utmost. He did unto the Lord as he had done unto Job His type. Will He obey? was his demand. In small things I see Him ready to obey—but will He still be obedient if his feelings shall be lacerated by more than ordinary affliction—if He be subjected to spiritual destitution, if He be agonised, if amidst the desertion of all men and the triumphant yells of fallen humanity, He shall die the death of a slave?

The question was answered when the Lord Jesus, bowing His head on the cross, said, "It is finished." The trial was over; the law was magnified; God incarnate had obeyed even unto death. He suffered, not because God delights in the contemplation of suffering humanity; but because, when the Lord came to obey, He came to be tempted, and when He was tempted to disobedience, He was of necessity to be tempted to the utmost; and because thus tried, He became the most afflicted of men.

The saying, then, is not hyperbolical or poetical, it is real, and, properly understood,

literally true, when we say our sins were the cause of all our blessed Saviour's sufferings; our sins were the heavy scourge on His back and the crown of thorns on His head; our sins the spikes which affixed Him to the cross, and the spear which pierced Him to the heart.

And then, my brethren, when you have realised these truths to your minds, we need say nothing to you of loyalty; you will hear the Saviour you love enjoin it upon you as a duty, as God provides the opportunity to cause the gospel—the glad tidings that such a Saviour exists—to be preached to every creature, whether by sustaining the Christian institutions in a Christian land, or sending forth the missionary to the heathen.

You will look out for opportunities. If it has pleased God to grant you wealth, and to assign you a prominent place among your fellows, you will gladly do what you see so nobly done in the place in which we are assembled. It was in the spirit of loyalty to the King of kings that this house was erected, holy and beautiful; it is in the spirit of loyalty

to our God and Saviour that we have our beautiful services; and may you, citizens of a heavenly kingdom, the kingdom of your Father, be regular in your attendance here, that, looking to your own souls, you may feel them inspired by the Holy Ghost with filial affections; looking to your neighbours you may seek their benefit, and pray for a blessing upon those who with you are united in offering up your sacrifice of praise; looking to your God, you may be zealous to promote His glory.

In order that, co-operating with the work of the Holy Ghost in our souls, there may be a proper influence exercised through the Church on the outward man, music has been introduced into our services.

These external aids in devotion, though considered in themselves they are inefficacious, have nevertheless a powerful efficacy upon those who have first in private, and by private prayer, made their hearts ready, as was the wont of King David, for that which is the peculiar sentiment in public worship.

"Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priest-

hood, a peculiar people," and, through Christ our Saviour, children of God. The great God is your King; He is also your Father. In private draw near with filial boldness and tell every event, every wish, to your Father, who is a hearer of prayer; pour out your whole soul before Him; confess to Him every fault; specify every grace you stand in need of; ask for things temporal as well as for things spiritual.

And then come from the inner chamber where you have been in communion with your Father, into the courts of His house, and remember that your Father is also your King, and He has provided for you a prescribed form of devotion. Here you will find an inspired liturgy, for such the Psalms have ever been accepted, under the law first, and now under the gospel.

Hence I have spoken to you of David. He is the psalmist, the sweet singer of Israel—of spiritual Israel, as well as of the natural descendants of Jacob.

God operates directly through the Holy

Spirit on the regenerate soul; but He requires also the use of external excitement; the outer man as well as the inner, the body as well as the mind and soul, are to be sanctified to His service.

Therefore the Holy Ghost inspired David, and others who followed the example of David, equally under inspiration, to compose the Psalms—a liturgy in the poetical form, as if to remind us, that while we pour forth our souls in unpremeditated fervour, or extemporaneously in private devotion, in our public services we are to labour to do things under the best and most solemn form. Poetry being the best, most difficult, most formal style of human composition, the greater part of our public worship consists, as was the case with the Jews before the coming of our Lord, in the solemn recitation of the Psalms. Certain prayers for public blessings are interspersed. There is a Litany which forms a distinct service; but take our morning and evening services, they chiefly consist of psalmody.

Of psalmody. But, my brethren, though we

very commonly use the word psalmody, it is strange how oblivious some persons are of the meaning of the word.

The apostle, you will recollect, distinguishes psalms from hymns and spiritual songs. The word hymn was derived, not from the Hebrew, but from the Gentile world; and among the heathens it referred to songs composed in praise of heroes and patriots. Consequently, when the word was introduced into the Christian Church, it was used to denote a song composed, whether by men under miraculous inspiration or not, whether accompanied by musical instruments or not, to glorify Jehovah and the great Captain of our salvation. The most sublime specimen we have of a hymn is the *Te Deum Laudamus.*

The word to which the apostle adds the epithet spiritual—spiritual songs, is more strictly rendered by the word Odes—a species of poetry adapted to music with the single object of soothing or exciting the feelings. It is to this style of composition that, in modern parlance, we are accustomed to confine the title of hymn.

We have scriptural authority for introducing hymns and spiritual songs into our services; and if time permitted, we might point out how important a part they may be made to bear in our public services. But I return to the word psalm.

What is a psalm? The word psalm, as you are aware, is derived from a Greek word corresponding with the Hebrew word, and is employed to denote a composition given by direct inspiration of God the Holy Ghost, for the express purpose of being sung to an instrument of music. It is derived from a root which does *not* signify to sing, but which *does* signify to play upon an instrument.

There was at one time a prejudice in some quarters against the use of instrumental music, but this has been gradually dying away, and can hardly now be said to exist.

I will only, therefore, remark that it shows how strong prejudice must sometimes be, since those who objected to the use of instrumental music in public worship professed to be guided by Scripture, whereas the use of the word psalm seems almost to command the use of

instrumental music; strictly speaking, there cannot be psalmody except when the sweet songs of Israel are sung to an instrument of music. But yet further, so important did the Almighty God regard the introduction of instrumental music into the services of the sanctuary, when Israel nationally did homage to the Divine King in the courts of the Lord's house, that we find it to be actually a divine appointment.

Not only was the poetry of the Psalms a divine inspiration, but the music which accompanied them was, I repeat it, a matter of divine appointment, as we are told by the words of Scripture, too generally overlooked. Turn to the Book of the Chronicles, and you find, "He (Hezekiah) set Levites in the house of the Lord, with cymbals and psalteries and harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the Lord."[1]

In this respect, therefore, the practice of our cathedrals is more scriptural than the custom of our parish churches.

[1] 2 Chron xxix. 25.

The custom of reading certain portions of Scripture—for such the Psalms are,—not as other portions of Scripture are read, but the minister saying one verse and the clerk and some of the congregation saying another verse, must strike foreigners when they first attend our services as something peculiar, until we account for it.

We have to tell them that for some reason or other the Puritan party in our Church, soon after the Reformation, entertained a violent prejudice against instrumental music, which happily no longer exists, or only in a very limited degree.

Against the organ it was, *especially*, that their prejudices were excited—they spoke of it as an abomination. The Reformers of the Church of England, in all our Reformations, even at the last Reformation in the time of Charles II., did, therefore, wisely to leave it to the option of each separate congregation to decide for itself whether the psalms shall be sung or said.

But as from the earliest times—from the age of Ignatius certainly—very probably as an in-

heritance from the Hebrew Church, the Psalms were sung or *chanted* antiphonally, men fell into the habit of *repeating* them antiphonally. Each congregation is here at liberty to decide on the course to be adopted.

This is not said with a view of recommending any change in the practice, but simply to account for it. The sentiment which induces people to desire an adherence to that to which they have been accustomed is a sentiment to be respected; and the minister cannot legally himself make any alteration in the services of the church except with the consent of the congregation and the bishop.

The chief objection to our chanting the Psalms at present lies in this, that it lengthens the service.

In some congregations this difficulty is over come by reverting to the original arrangement of the services, according to which the morning service is first performed, then the Litany and Communion Service, and after that the evening service.

But that is only mentioned in passing to

show that the objection can be met, and that the difficulty is not insuperable.

I hasten, in the last place, to advert to the history of David as a warning.

We have seen that it is lawful to have recourse to legitimate measures for the excitement of devotional fervour in hearts already renewed by the Holy Ghost, when we come together to tender our homage to the King of kings. We have seen that it is lawful to render our acts of devotion enthusiastic and pleasurable. To some persons this end is obtained by extreme simplicity. We blame them not for their love of simplicity; we only call upon them not to blame others—weaker brethren they may call them—who require helps to devotion—helps to devotion, not devotion itself. Devotion itself is a force vouchsafed by the indwelling of God's Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit, even the Lord our God, works through means and the operation of secondary causes. When we neglect these we err, even as we always err when we forget to add exertion to prayer.

Many there are whose feelings are very ex-

citable, whose whole soul is stirred up within them—some by the eloquence of a preacher, others by the music of the sanctuary.

What remains for us to do is to warn you that as wealth is a blessing if properly employed, but becomes a curse if confined to the purchase of mere selfish enjoyments, so these excitable feelings, often a great advantage in our spiritual growth, may lead to the most dangerous self-deception.

When the heart is overflowing with devotional fervour, when there is an enthusiastic rapture which raises the soul to heaven, or creates a heaven upon earth—all this may be the effect of a divine afflatus, the work on the soul of God the Holy Ghost; and in the experience of many of us, the happiest, holiest moments of our lives have been those in which we have experienced this feeling of enraptured love to God our Saviour, an energetic loyalty in His service, the ecstasies of devotion.

But although this may be the effect of a divine inspiration, such as we are taught to expect, it may also, nevertheless, be mere self-deception.

It is a common custom of the profane to point out and to dwell upon the inconsistencies which are, alas! sometimes perceptible in those who are all enthusiasm in the performance of their devotional exercises, who weep profusely at a sermon, or are animated by a musical service; but who are defective in moral strength of character, who yield to temptation, are unamiable in their families, mean and dishonourable, sometimes immoral in their conduct.

What then? Are we to suppose that religious fervour is never an inspiration of God the Holy Ghost? Does not the Lord, in appointing those musical services to which we have been adverting, direct us—since prayer and exertion are always to go together—to do what we can to encourage in ourselves an ardour of devotion?

The fault does not lie here. The fault is this, that these persons make the existence in themselves of these high-wrought devotional feelings, the test and proof of their being in a state of sanctification.

My brethren, there is only one proof of our being in a state of grace. What is our conduct?

The believer in Jesus who is leading a strictly moral life is in a state of grace—since of every good and perfect gift God is the author;—the believer who is leading a strictly moral life is in a state of grace, although from a certain coldness of temperament, or the want of an education given to his affections in early life, he is never excited to ecstasy, and knows not what religious rapture is.

But, on the other hand, however excitable the devotional feelings may be, that man is *not* in a state of grace whose conduct is not conformable to the moral requirements of the gospel. He may *have* been in a state of grace at one time; but if you are sensual, malignant, envious, covetous, immoral at the present time, from grace you have fallen, and unless you repent, perish you must.

David fell; and if David had not repented he would have perished everlastingly.

Who ever was more fervent in his devotions than David had been? O ye, then, whose

hearts are fervent in adoration to your Saviour and your God, take warning from David, and watch as well as pray.

David repented; and David was pardoned. Yes; but the pardon of David is no encouragement to sin and carelessness.

David's loyalty to his God returned; it made his repentance sincere. He was not merely sorry for sin because sin had endangered his salvation; but read the 51st Psalm, and you will see that David's lifelong sorrow was occasioned by his having offended his God, by his having brought scandal to that cause of God to which he had devoted his previous life. A scandal he brought upon the Church of the living God, which, even to the present hour, damages the cause. A fiendish and sarcastic laugh plays round the lips of the profane when they point to David, who, before his fall, was a man after God's own heart.

Therefore mark his history. David loved his God. David nevertheless fell. The fallen David was sinking into hell; the effect of his sin was, in the natural course of things, eternal misery.

David repented; there was an Intercessor at the throne of grace, though that Intercessor had not yet been incarnate. David on his repentance was not to sink into hell. He was a pardoned sinner. The greatest saint can be no more, and the pardoned hath left us a psalm which speaks home—does it not, my brother? —to every pardoned sinner's heart.

But the scoffing world was to be silenced in its blasphemy, and it is made to see that the consequences of David's sin were not, so far as this world is concerned—that world to which only the profane are wont to look, to be remitted. Look to David's after-life, what a life of misery it was! Who, with the exception of Job, was ever tried and grieved and bowed down to the very dust as David was? See his once joyous spirit, his sanguine temperament, for ever crushed. One after another troubles incessantly came upon him, like wave succeeding wave on a troubled sea, domestic trials, inflicted, for the most part, by his own children, those nearest and dearest to his tender heart.

He lived to mourn over his daughter's dishonour; to weep over an incestuous murderer in one son, to declare another son a rebel. See him driven from his throne and kingdom, driven by his much-loved child, a miserable, outcast, insulted old man; see him disappointed in his fondest dearest hope, and not permitted to erect a temple to Jehovah.

Ay, my brethren, we can promise in the name of the Lord Jesus pardon to the penitent sinner. Ay, my brethren, the blood of Christ can pardon the most aggravated sin, and His Spirit sanctify the most polluted nature. Come to Jesus, poor sinner, for the Lord Jesus waits to be gracious. Come to Him without fear; come to Him without delay; come to Him in prayer; come to Him in faith; come to Him in His sacrament; come to Him, and He will give rest to your soul.

But while we say this we warn you, from the example of David, that whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.

Come to Him, and with the righteousness of

Christ imputed to you; come to Him, and for Jesus' sake being accounted holy,—draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, then join with men and angels, and all the holy ones of God, to unite in singing the praises of the true Jehovah.

BARZILLAI.

"And the king said unto Barzillai, Come thou over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. And Barzillai said unto the king, How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?"

2 SAM. xix. 33-35.

THIS short account of David's treatment of Barzillai is deeply interesting, and the consideration of it may, by the blessing of God, be edifying and instructive. Barzillai was a Gileadite, and when, at the great rebellion which was headed by Absalom, David was a fugitive, he was met at Mahanaim by Barzillai and other royalists, who "brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentils, and parched pulse, and honey, and

butter, and sheep, and cheese of kine, for David and for the people that were with him ; for they said, Thy people is hungry, and weary, and thirsty, in the wilderness."

In this passage of Scripture we have an account of David's expression of gratitude, the feeling of gratitude being always a characteristic of a truly noble heart.

First observe the proposal of David. Now there is one thing which strikes us at once, both when we read what Barzillai did to David, and what David in his gratitude proposed to Barzillai, and *that* is, the wonderful difference between the manners of that age and our own.

We should have offered money, but the use of coined money was not at that time by any means general, and, before the adoption of money, trade was carried on by way of barter —that is, by exchanging one commodity for another. When the inconvenience of this system was experienced, we find the use of such metals as were most valuable in traffic introduced. This was the introduction of money, but *not* of *coined* money; these metals were

paid and received by weight; a thing was bought and sold for so much weight of silver and gold. When Abraham purchased the cave of Machpelah, he weighed to Ephron the silver which Ephron had named as the price.[1] When Joseph's brethren stood before the steward of Joseph's house, they said, "It came to pass, when we came to the inn, that we opened our sacks, and, behold, every man's money was in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight."[2] This was a step in advance, but the inconvenience, first, of ascertaining the purity of the metal offered in traffic, and then of weighing it, induced men after a time to give to each metal a certain mark, weight, and degree of alloy, in order to determine its value, and to save both buyer and seller the trouble of weighing and examining it. This was the way in which *coined* money was introduced. Even this, we all know, has not been sufficient for the purposes of modern commerce, and property to an incalculable amount is changing hands every

[1] Gen. xxiii. 16. [2] Gen. xliii. 21.

day, every hour, without the instrumentality of even coined money, but by transactions on paper.

It was not till a late period that coinage was introduced among the Hebrews, the first mention of a coinage occurring, I believe, in the history of Judas Maccabæus.

In the account of Barzillai's princely donation to David in his distress, and in the offer of David to Barzillai, we perceive the difficulties to which persons were not unfrequently exposed before the use of coined money prevailed.

Sovereigns and great men received their rents very seldom in money payments; they were generally paid in kind; they received from one tenant so many measures of wheat, from another so many measures of oil, from another so many head of cattle.

And how were they to pay their officers of state, their servants and their friends?

They could only do as David offered to do to Barzillai.

In modern times it would have been easy to say, I am rich, and I will pay thee out of my

income a certain pension, a certain annual sum of money.

But all that David could say, was, "Come over with me, and I will feed thee with me in Jerusalem. My palace shall be your home; in all my comforts and luxuries thou shalt have a share; my house shall be thy house, and my home thy home."

This accounts for what we read of Solomon. He was a munificent sovereign; he rewarded liberally all who served him; and hence we are told that Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and three score measures of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallow-deer, and fatted fowl.[1]

Certain persons at certain periods were permitted thus to eat at the king's cost, to share in the magnificence of the palace, and to stand in the royal presence.

Now, my object in alluding to these circumstances is this—to point out the wonderful ways of Providence.

[1] 1 Kings iv. 22.

In considering the history of civilisation, we are often amazed at seeing how the ancients missed the arts of modern discovery—the art of painting, for example. It was indeed known: we see it applied to earthenware and the Etruscan pottery; it only missed its application to literature. And the same may be said of the use of coined money which has tended so much to the advancement and civilisation of society.

To us who take a Christian view of the subject, wonder is soon changed into admiration.

We trace everything to the ordinance of God.

Not only spiritually, but intellectually, we are dependent upon Him.

The genius of which a worm of the dust is so proud is an inspiration of God.

He it is who has granted to *us* the discoveries in science which He withheld from the ancients.

And now, my brother, observe:—

Everything is rendered subservient to the interests of the Messiah's kingdom. Under the Hebrew system, to the purposes of His

first coming; under the Christian dispensation, to the purposes of His second coming.

The design of the Lord, in the election of the Hebrew people, was to preserve a nation distinct from all other nations, that when the Messiah should come, there might be a people long prepared by prophecy to receive Him.

The very principle of their election was isolation: they were to be kept separate and distinct.

All their institutions had this tendency: they were elected from the nations of the East, and kept distinct, that through them, in the fulness of time, all nations should be blessed.

But this isolation would have been impossible if the Hebrews had been a commercial people.

Solomon was indeed a commercial prince; but the merchants were merely his agents, and the commerce was designed merely to fill the coffers of royalty; a process which overflowed with advantages to the people, but which did not constitute them a commercial nation.

And after all, the commercial transactions of Solomon were his ruin; and by his fall the people were taught that he had not acted up to the spirit of the law.

You observe: We know it to have been the will of God that the Israelites should be a separated people.

This could not have been the case, if they had been a commercial people. The powers of mind, therefore, which lead to the discovery of those arts and sciences which act upon commerce, and which depend for reaction upon commercial enterprise, seem not vouchsafed to them.

We see the principle, if we may so speak, on which Divine Providence acted.

On the other hand, we Christians *are* a commercial people; wherever Christianity exists, there commercial enterprise more or less prevails. By nothing is modern Europe more distinguished from ancient, than by that spirit of commerce which was at one period despised.

And all the arts are bearing upon this point. Science has become practical: coined money,

bills of exchange, railroads, electric telegraphs —all are given to facilitate the intercourse between man and man, between nation and nation, between one people and another, making gradually the whole world one family.

And why? Why this intellectual inspiration at one period which was withheld in another?

It is even because the Christian Church occupies a position directly the opposite of that which was occupied by the Levitical Church.

The mandate to the Hebrews was: Narrow your borders till Messiah comes. The mandate to the Christian Church is: Expand; preach the gospel to every creature.

Temptations to expand were withheld from the Israelites; the power of expanding, of spreading the gospel from soil to soil and from pole to pole, is a power vouchsafed to the Christian Church, and every day increasing in force.

Godless men, men living without God in the world, go blindly forward; ignoring, sometimes blaspheming God, they glory in the genius which makes discoveries, and in the en-

terprise which brings those discoveries to bear upon the purposes of life; but they are only instruments in the hands of that God who intends, as He instructs us, that, through human agency, under the guidance of the blessed Spirit, the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God, as the waters cover the sea.

The true Christian, like the true Israelite, marks these things, and says: "Verily, there is a God that judgeth the earth." Wonderful indeed are the ways of God to those who have eyes to see and ears to hear!

II. And now, in the next place, we will turn to Barzillai.

Barzillai received from David a lordly offer.

According to the customs of the age, instead of offering him a pension in money, David offered him a residence in his palace.

The comfort, the splendour, the pleasures of that royal household, would have been attractive to Barzillai in his younger days: he would have been gratified by the honour of a place near the royal person of the great king, King David.

But, as he remarked, of what use would it have been for him, in extreme old age, to go with the king to Jerusalem?

Of what use to have seen spread before him the most delicious viands, when, his taste being gone, he could not discern between good and evil, between bitter and sweet? He seems to have been more enfeebled by age than are some men of fourscore.

In vain, for the deaf old man, would sound the choicest strains of music—the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, and psaltery. Even David, the Psalmist, the sweet singer of Israel, would have sung in vain for him.

The palace of David, the abode of refinement, literature, taste; the home of all that dignified and adorned the nation—it would have been anything but a place of happiness to *him.*

Observe, then, the reason of Barzillai's refusal to accept the offer of the king. Even external blessings cease to be such to those who have no sense which is capable of enjoying them. It is not in the possession of

external advantages, but in the power to enjoy them, that the blessing consists.

The youth, filled with the spirit of enterprise, as he sniffs the mountain breeze, though his fare be scanty, has an enjoyment of life which is denied to the poor pampered sensualist, surrounded by luxuries for which the appetite is gone.

And who is the happiest man? not the possessor of millions, but the healthy man who, in early and middle age, is zealously pursuing his calling in life, doing with all his might what his hand findeth to do—sometimes failing, sometimes succeeding—but whether in failure or in success, finding his real happiness in his work, in doing as well as he can what is before him.

Oh! how in old age we look back with pleasure to the enjoyment which was ours in doing the work our God gave us to do—doing it heartily from the love of God. And in old age, see how the old man loves to continue his labours. He requires no increase to his fortune; his character is established;

all the world advises him to retire; but no, there he is at his place of business, or at his study, at his post of duty, and all because, the habit being formed, he loves his work for the work's sake; even when his hand is paralysed and his body is feeble, his delight is to talk with younger men of those matters to which his mind, his heart, is given. In their work, their energy, their enthusiasm, he seems to live again.

When we have no stomach for the fight, then it is that the battle of life is wearisome. It is to the inner man that we must look for real satisfaction and true enjoyment.

III. And here we come to that practical instruction which I wish to have, in the last place, impressed upon our minds. And it is this, that since in the most enjoyable position we may be the most wretched of men, heaven itself would not be heaven to us, unless we were prepared for its peculiar joys and especial blessings.

On the one hand, the constitution of human nature requires something external to make us

happy; but on the other we are so constituted that there must be some correspondence from within with the external object, or the external object can impart no pleasure.

And now, my brethren, observe the mercy of Him with whom we have to do.

By the King of kings and the Lord of lords, of whom David was the humble type, an offer is made to us of a seat upon His throne in the realms of endless bliss.

He has effected the atonement through which, in consistency with His justice, His mercy opens to us the gates of heaven.

He invites us to that blest place, where there are joys such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind of man conceived, unutterable, indescribable.

What shall we say? What shall we do?

My brethren, when we think of heaven, what it is, and remember what we are by nature, we should feel that the invitation were a mockery, unless it were accompanied by a promise.

Barzillai could not restore his lost powers.

He represents the natural man in his impotence. But there is One who abideth in the Church, even the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, who can raise us up from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness, from old age to youth, whose special office it is to renew, make new, our old nature—to make new, to restore those faculties lost at man's fall, by which we may be enabled to enjoy those blessings to which we are invited.

Unless we have dispositions meet for heaven, we could no more enjoy the Court of the King of kings than Barzillai, without the sense of hearing or of taste, could have enjoyed the court of Jehovah's viceroy on earth, King David.

Mark this, and then let us remember what those dispositions are.

Heaven is prepared for us; are we prepared for it?

If we were in heaven, who would be our companions? As I have before said, just men made perfect—those men who, when on earth, gloried in the cross of Christ; who, amidst

much weakness and imperfection, went on from grace to grace, relying for justification on the merits of Christ their Saviour, who for His sake were then accounted just, and who are now perfected in their righteousness.

Are we fit to be the companions of such? Are we prepared to sit down with them in the kingdom of God, our hearts sympathising with them as they pass from one degree of glory to another, ever knowing more and more of Him whom to know is love? And these are associated, we are expressly told in Scripture, with an innumerable company of angels. And their association with angels gives us an insight into their employment as well as their joys.

We are told in Scripture what is the song of the heavenly hosts. Their heavenly song is "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."[1]

But a song is merely the jubilant expression of an affection.

Go to the orgies of the profligate, and you learn from their songs the bestiality of their nature.

[1] St. Luke ii. 14.

Go to the sanctuary of the pious, and you will hear them expressing the piety of their sentiments in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.

And so this song of angels opens to us, as it were, the angelic mind, and shows not only how they are employed, but the heart from which the words flow forth.

We learn that the one sentiment in heaven is to exalt God above everything, and to love one another.

Now if these be not the affections by which *our* hearts, my brethren, are swayed—if there be not this universal charity which loves everything in God, this charity which shall outlive faith and hope—then, on the very ground that Barzillai refused the invitation of David, we must feel ourselves to be disqualified for heaven.

Observe, I have not spoken of the openly profligate and profane; these we all know, if we know anything of Scripture, must be excluded from heaven unless they repent.

I speak of those who are good sort of people

in their way, but who are not spiritually minded—who have no relish, no taste, for heavenly things. And we would remind them that by purity of intention and by integrity of heart; by meekness of spirit and by gentleness of conduct; by patience in suffering and by forbearance in insult; by earnestness in our devotions and by heartiness in our affections; by ceaseless labours of love and by constant deeds of righteousness; by eschewing pride, vanity, and vain-glory; by taking the lower place in the synagogue, and by giving to others the praise while we ourselves are conscious of doing the work; by being sincere without bigotry, and by taking care that our fervent religion be exempt alike from the weakness of superstition and the remains of fanaticism, we must endeavour to be not merely moral, but also men of piety.

It is, then, an awful question we propose, when we ask, Are you prepared for heaven?

Where would your soul be if it were this night required of you?

Let each one answer for himself. Remem-

ber this—the invitation is to all. The Holy Ghost is ready to renew every one of those who have been baptized—to create a new heart and heavenly dispositions in them. But for His assistance and renovating influence we must pray, and with prayerful hearts have recourse to the ordinances of the Church; and especially to that ordinance against which Satan directs all his artifices, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ.

We must pray for whatever we want, whether for things temporal or for things spiritual; we must ask, seek, knock.

But remember this, while we pray we must labour. We pray for the harvest, but we must at the same time sow the seed.

And while we seek for the grace of the Holy Spirit by prayer and in the supper of the Lord, we must also labour.

If we desire heavenly dispositions, we must abstain from sinful actions and from sinful companions.

If we would obtain heavenly dispositions, we must not only read but meditate on Scripture.

If we would obtain heavenly dispositions we must hold communion with religious friends.

We must be not only moral but religious; we must have a new heart; so that when the end comes, whether it be before or after fourscore years, and the Lord of lords invites us to heaven—as David invited Barzillai to his palaces—we may be able to say,

Yea, Lord, for Thy Holy Spirit hath changed my heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

Yea, Lord, for my nature hath been reinvigorated by constant regaling on that bread of life which hath come down from heaven to strengthen and refresh my soul.

Yea, Lord, for my ears have been ever open to hear the joyful sounds of Thine everlasting gospel, and with my lips I have sung Thy praise.

Yea, Lord, for I shall not be a burden to my lord the king, since, by the unsearchable riches of Christ, the wedding garment hath been purchased for me, in which I shall appear a welcome guest.

Yea, Lord, for I love Thy people, and desire the wellbeing of everything that exists.

Yea, Lord, for I adore Thee! O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost! Thee, O Father, whose child I am! Thee, O Son, with whom, through faith, I am one! Thee, O Holy Ghost, who hast attuned my heart to join with angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven when they laud and magnify the glorious name of the triune deity, saying, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory; Glory be to Thee, O Lord most high!"

HEZEKIAH AND SENNACHERIB.

"But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not."—2 KINGS xviii. 36.

HEZEKIAH was the king, the good and wise Hezekiah, by whom this commandment was given. The kingdom of Israel was already destroyed; that of Judah, still governed by the descendants of David, continued; and though surrounded by terrible enemies, through the exertions of Hezekiah, blessed by the visible protection of the God whom he served, it was in his reign prosperous in its independence, and in the industry and happiness of the people.

But although he left his kingdom when he died, in circumstances thus prosperous, he had very fearful difficulties with which, at certain periods, to contend. And to one of these periods our text refers.

The Assyrians, the conquerors of the king-

dom of Israel, had no intention of tolerating the independence of the kingdom of Judah. An immense Assyrian army made its appearance in Judea, and sat down before Lachish. The alarm of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was great, and it is described with wonderful power by the prophet Isaiah. This attack, however, was warded off by Hezekiah, who submitted to his enemies and paid an enormous tribute. In this the good King Hezekiah erred. Instead of paying tribute to the foreign invader, he should have trusted, as he afterwards did trust, to the Lord his God, and a blessing, doubtless, would then have attended his exertions. We may, however, gather from Isaiah that he was compelled to the course he adopted by the conduct of his people, who in their alarm and in their want of confidence in that divine Providence, so often exerted in their favour, would not make head against their powerful enemies.

Hezekiah and his people were punished. Three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold had been demanded of them by

the Assyrians; and to pay this Hezekiah exhausted both his own treasury and that of the temple; he had even to strip off the gold with which the pillars of the Lord's house were overlaid.

The nation being thus impoverished, although their poverty was accepted as a sufficient punishment for their distrust, and they were not at this time delivered to their enemy, the Assyrian broke faith with Hezekiah and his people. Sennacherib, after receiving the tribute, continued his warlike operations. Having determined upon the conquest of Egypt, Sennacherib employed himself in taking the fortresses of Judea, which, with that object in view, it was necessary for him to secure; and at the same time he sent his generals—Tartan, Rabsaris, and Rabshakeh—with part of his forces to Jerusalem, to demand an unconditional surrender. Hezekiah sent three of the chief officers of his palace to negotiate. The Assyrians addressed the men of Jerusalem in language the most insulting. Rabshakeh was the spokesman on the Assyrian side. And Rabshakeh is

supposed to be an apostate Jew, therefore he could address the people in their own language, and therefore also he knew how to frame his argument, and making his address the more offensive to add insult to injury. His language was insulting not only to the king and his people, but to the living God. He contemptuously taunted them with their confidence in Jehovah, a confidence in all their public documents expressed, though on late occasions so little evinced. "Hath any of the gods of the nations," he said, "delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not." [1]

[1] 2 Kings xviii. 33, *seq.*

You see here the cruel bitterness of an apostate; his use of the very kind of language which he thinks will be most offensive; expressing an hatred against the God he has forsaken. How terrible to the ears of Hezekiah and Isaiah, and the faithful still existing in Jerusalem, to hear the Almighty Lord God, the one, the only God, compared with the demons of heathen worship. There were, you will recollect, two classes of free-thinkers among the Jews—the great multitude who regarded it as uncharitable to imply that the gods of the heathens were non-entities, and that there was only *one* God, and those who went farther, and who doubted whether among the gods many and the lords many Jehovah was the most powerful. Sennacherib was flattered and deified, and as a deity represented as the most powerful god.

When the terms of the summons were made known to Hezekiah, he gathered courage, yes, he gathered courage from the conviction that God would not fail to vindicate the honour of His insulted name. Faith, which had slumbered, was now revived, and it was immediately

accepted in God's name by the prophet Isaiah, who under Divine inspiration promised the utter discomfiture and overthrow of the blasphemous Assyrian. "Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land."[1]

Now, my brethren, out of the many points of instruction, and the many subjects for meditation suggested to the mind by the mere perusal of this portion of sacred history, I have fixed upon one,—that which I have selected for our text. "But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not."

How strong must the temptation have been to answer the apostate Rabshakeh. An apostate, a pervert, a wretched being who had lately been one of themselves, now one of the most bitter enemies, the reviler of the religion he, a short time since, had professed. When such a wretched being appears among us, proud of holding in the camp of the enemy

[1] 2 Kings xix. 7.

that place which he was not worthy to hold among ourselves, we are inclined at once to spurn the Rabshakeh with indignation.

Offensive as the language was, from Rabshakeh's lips it was more offensive still. And what rendered silence more difficult, was the easiness of the answer which might have been given by reference to the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which Jehovah had rescued His people from the house of bondage.

The just indignation and wrath at hearing their God blasphemed, and that too by an apostate, must have burned within their hearts, it must have sought an outburst. But the king's command was that they should be silent, and silent they were.

And was not the king's commandment wise? Doubtless, to have engaged them in a controversy on the walls of Jerusalem would have been to Rabshakeh more satisfactory. But wherein would have been the advantage to the men of Judah, or to himself?

Did Rabshakeh repent? was his heart softening? If *that* had been the case, then indeed

an answer *would* have been given him; then Isaiah who, though tremendous in his denunciations, was mild as the gospel itself to the penitent, would have reasoned with him, and would have listened to the statement of his difficulties, and would have sought his conviction and conversion. But Rabshakeh was too well known; to have conversed with him would have only afforded him an opportunity to give utterance to more awful blasphemies; it would have conduced to his own deeper condemnation, and to the disgust of some, and perhaps to the injury of others, who would have been present at the discussion. No good could possibly have arisen from the verbal controversy which the apostate Rabshakeh tried to provoke; angry passions might have been excited and inflamed; but Hezekiah knew that "the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

The Assyrians—they would not have been converted any more than Rabshakeh; their minds were fully made up; and the faith of the weak among the Israelites might have

been shaken; for by the weak and the ignorant doubts are more easily entertained, when once suggested, than the arguments understood which the really wise advance. "A mere fool may in a very few words start a difficulty," says an ancient bishop, "which it would take a whole volume for a man of learning to answer or explain."

Let us, my brethren, learn wisdom from Hezekiah. When we find a person desirous of discussing any article of the faith or any doctrine of the Church, not for the sake of arriving at the truth, but merely or chiefly to indulge a controversial temper, or to display what, puffed up by his own conceit, he may imagine to be his superior wisdom; when we find a man arguing not for truth but for victory; when instead of approaching high and holy subjects with meekness and reverence; when, instead of showing kindness and tenderheartedness towards those whom he may think in error, he evinces bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, our wisdom is, though sorrowful, still to be silent.

It is a good thing to know how to speak; it is a better thing to know when to be silent. "He that reproveth a scorner," saith the wise man, "getteth to himself shame:" to answer a sneer is a thing impossible. And, therefore, before we enter into discussion upon any great doctrine of the Christian Church, we should always ask ourselves, Is our opponent sincere in his wish to ascertain the truth; if he is not, there is another piece of advice given us in the Book of Proverbs, in that seemingly paradoxical form which the Scriptures sometimes adopt in order to impress truths the more deeply upon the mind: "Answer *not* a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him. *Answer* a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit;" that is, Enter not into argument with the unwise man, lest by the use of words, manifestly idle, you prove yourself as great a fool as he. But if the man *will* persevere, then answer him according to his folly: he argues, not for truth, but, as he imagines, to show his wit; and, if you have the ability, seek to silence him, not by pro-

found argument, but by the keen edge of a repartee.

To those who ask in meekness and reverence, we are to give a reason of the hope that is in us, and if our reason is not to the inquirer sufficient, we should refer him to some one wiser than ourself. Yet, even when doing our duty by giving a reason of the hope that is in us, we are to proceed with caution, for a good cause may be injured, not by the power of an opponent's sophistry or argument, but by the weakness of our own defence. It is very possible that the worse cause may have in our case the abler advocate. Or again, it may be possible that we may forget the arguments by which we were ourselves at one time persuaded.

All that may remain to us, is the remembrance that when we examined the subject we were satisfied; and then the safe answer to an objector is that of the old martyr, Bishop Latimer, who, when persecuted by the Papists, ere they put him to death, by a variety of questions, replied in effect—that he would not argue the points of difference between him and them in

his old age, and with a debilitated mind, but that he should still retain his opinions, though opposed to theirs, because when, in the full vigour of his mind, he *did* examine them, he was fully persuaded. He would now not argue, but if they will it, prove his sincerity by dying. When, having examined a subject, we have been fully convinced, our conviction should remain stereotyped.

When a person applies for information, sincerely and with a real desire of information, we should endeavour to instruct him, or else, which is the wiser course, to procure for him instruction from others.

When, on the contrary, there is no sincerity in the querist, entire silence is the better course, both for the truth's sake and for his own sake; for his own sake, for we shall prevent him from committing an act of folly, if not of blasphemy; for the truth's sake, for he will only become in his exasperation more vehement in his opposition to it, and less likely at some future time to be convinced.

Besides, it very often happens that an im-

portant truth cannot be believed without the admission of certain preceding truths. For example—it would be worse than useless to enter into discussion on the doctrine of the Trinity with a person who does not believe in the plenary inspiration of Scripture; or to discuss the doctrine of the sacraments with a person who is ignorant of the mediatorial system and kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. With such a person we are silent on these subjects, and we ought to say, I refuse to discourse on the higher mysteries until you have mastered the first principles; I refuse to give you meat when what you need is milk; and I do so because the higher mysteries of our faith would revolt you, and offend you, and confirm you in your infidelity, until you have arrived at them by regular steps or gradations. "Listen not," says an old father of the Church, St. Cyril, "to one who asks, What harm is in my knowing also? Even the sick ask for wine, which, unseasonably given, brings on delirium, and so there come two evils—the death of the patient and the disrepute of the physician."

Where is the pious mind that is not offended when men attempt to discuss the holy things of God with the carelessness or the passion which they bring to the discussion of the passing events of the day? Where is he who does actually and in his very heart believe the tremendous realities which the Church and the gospel combine to bring under his notice, and does not, awe-stricken, shrink from the profanation of bringing them incessantly forward, in all companies and in all societies, to be bandied about by the literary gladiators, or to be treated as those unsubstantial shadows which the world pursues? What! can we thus lightly, at the banquet or in the gay assembly, or among the idle if not the profane, discuss those awful truths which relate to man in his natural sinfulness, to God, even the blessed Trinity, in the majesty of His perfect purity—the creating Father, the redeeming Son, the sanctifying Spirit, the mysterious agonies of Gethsemane, the stupendous sacrifice of the cross, the grace of the sacraments, the beatific vision of the Trinity in the world to come.

Even of the Church itself, those who believe that it is, militant and triumphant, visible and invisible, the mystical body of Christ, will fear to speak before infidels, and so to cast their pearls before swine. If these things are really and in the heart believed, they are too holy in our minds to be lightly brought forward or to be discussed at unfitting times: they are secrets on which to ponder when in communion with the Father of our spirits; secrets upon which we love to meditate in our moments of retirement; secrets on which we take sweet counsel with those who are our own familiar friends; secrets which we bring with us here to God's house, where we feel ourselves to be surrounded by those to whom these secrets are as real and dear as they are to ourselves. Our soul has a secret with its God—shall we divulge it to our soul's enemy, the world?

Such instruction we may derive from the commandment of Hezekiah; but we have the same instruction from still higher authority, even the example of Hezekiah's Lord. Think of the conduct of our Lord and only Saviour

Jesus Christ. He, the everlasting Son of the Father, the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity, came down from the majesty on high, and was born of the Virgin Mary, and, God though He still was, became man also, that, as the God-man, He by His sufferings might make atonement for the sins of the whole world. Oh! how the thoughts of all these mercies rush into the mind and elevate the soul that is sanctified by the truth, when we, poor sinners, speak of the Lord Jesus! Well, indeed, may we be taught by the inspired Church to bow the head when we utter that name Jesus, that name of love, that name of our God made Man; Jesus the Man,—we bow when we speak it to show that we believe that man to be also God.

Behold Him for our sakes insulted. "He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth."[1] He, "as a deaf man, heard not;

[1] Isaiah liii. 7.

and He was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth."[1] So was His history described by prophecy. Behold Him before the high priest and the Sanhedrim. "The high priest arose, and said unto Him, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? *But Jesus held His peace.*" Behold Him before Pontius Pilate. "And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing."[2]

Or think of our dear Lord and Master at an earlier period of His history, when in the Temple He was questioned by the chief priests and elders of the people: "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?"[3] He gave no answer to their question, but reduced them to a dilemma and to silence by putting to them a question concerning the baptism of John. A similar course He pursued when the question was put to Him, simply with the design of involving Him in a perplexity, "Is it lawful to give tribute

[1] Psalm xxxviij. 13.

[2] St. Matthew xxvi. 62; xxvii. 12. [3] St. Matthew xxi. 23-27.

to Cæsar or not?"[1] On this and on other occasions our blessed Lord, instead of answering, silenced His opponents; and in His reply, instead of entering into a discussion with them, exposed either their ignorance or their malice, and so, in effect, answered them not. He would not cast His pearls before swine, who would only have trampled them under their feet, and would have turned again to rend Him who had cast them.

How different, on the other hand, was it when any one—the publican, the sinner, the worst of sinners—with an honest desire to obtain instruction, approached our kind and merciful Lord and Master! How forbearing was He when they were ignorant! how powerfully, and yet gradually, did He bring the light of truth to bear upon their minds, enlightening the intellect through the heart, curing their bodily diseases, that they might be the more disposed humbly to hear! When He saw the heart honest; when He saw a difficulty really presenting itself to an

[1] St. Matt. xxii. 17.

honest and sincere heart; when a question, however impertinent, was honestly put, then did He speak, and then were the words of Him, the Almighty, of avail. How patient was He with His apostles! How gentle, as the lamb, which was His type, even in His reproofs! How gradually He prepared them for the full influx of the Holy Spirit! How calmly He led them, step by step, until they were built up in all the council of God!

My brethren, see how essential it is, in all our religious investigations and inquiries, to have an honest and a good heart. If, when you make any inquiry into any doctrine of religion, you can honestly answer such questions as these, Am I determined if, upon the investigation I find myself to be in error, to renounce the error? Am I determined to perform the duty which is involved in every doctrine, rightly understood; yea, though it be to me as the plucking out of a right eye or the cutting off of a right hand; yea, though it involve me in miseries such as the apostles had to endure—in weariness and painfulness, in

watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness; though it involve more than this, the renunciation of that besetting sin, whether it be vanity, or pride, or selfishness, or whatever it be which clings to the heart?—If to these questions you can answer, "All this I am prepared to do, the Lord being my helper," then will the Spirit of God lead you into all saving truth necessary for your salvation. Then you will find joy in the thought that Jesus, the ever blessed Jesus, who pitied the apostles in their ignorance, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, to guide by His Spirit those who, when they are engaged in seeking the truth as it is in Jesus, are equally humble in heart and contrite in soul.

But is it with a proud heart and a high look, with self-sufficiency and pride—is it with a temper determined, come what will, to do as the heart lusteth, that you approach a holy subject? Do you approach it that you may become accomplished as a disputer of this world? Do you approach it merely to show your skill in debate? Do you enter upon the discussion

of sacred subjects with the malignant spirit of the Pharisees, to find some specious ground for cavil or a sneer, or to entrap a rival in his talk?

Then shall you find no answer, no satisfactory answer, to your inquiries. You will end a sceptic as you commenced. No response will come from the Lord or the Spirit of the Lord. The things which are spiritually discerned you will have no spirit to discern, and in the midst of light you will grope about like the blind.

My brethren, before all things, when we seek for spiritual improvement, we must have recourse to self-examination and to prayer; we must pray to God to give us an honest heart before we venture to inquire into the things of God.

It is one of the disadvantages with which the preacher has to contend, that out of regard to the more advanced of his brethren, he has from the pulpit to declare the whole council of God, while, at the same time, he knows that there are some of those before him whose un-

converted hearts are unable to receive the deep things of God; who mock, and sneer, and revile, and reject, and trample under foot the great truths before them; yea, trample under foot the very cross of Christ itself. But so it must be: we in the pulpit may keep nothing back; the whole mystery of salvation, when we preach the gospel, must be laid in all its fulness before you; and we must, in charity, suppose that the hearts of all are honest. We are indeed to supply milk for the babes, and the advanced Christian must hear us with patience (ay, and he will hear with profit too) while we exhort the unconverted to turn unto the Lord. But while we are supplying the milk of the word, we must provide also meat for the men that are in Christ Jesus.

Are there any here present whose consciences have been smitten while I have been speaking? I do not ask if there be a Rabshakeh here, an open blasphemer, an avowed infidel, an acknowledged apostate? No; such a one is not likely to have intruded among us. But are there none who hold the truth in carelessness? upon

whose conduct the truth, professed with their lips, is uninfluential? hearers, but not doers of the word?

Is not a change of heart necessary in such? You know it is; you deplore the present coldness and deadness of your heart to things spiritual. You have tried to excite religious feelings within yourselves, and you have tried in vain. You have read books, you have heard preachers; still you think that all has been in vain. Have you not, perhaps, been relying too much on human means? They are not to be despised. But Hezekiah was unsuccessful when, to avert an evil, he gave to his enemy all the silver he found in the House of the Lord, and cut off the gold from the doors of the Temple of the Lord. A blessing, on the other hand, came to him when, without neglecting the means of defence, he threw himself unreservedly on the mercies of Jehovah, waiting patiently till the Lord's time for deliverance should arrive.

If you, instead of resorting to the Lord in His ordinances, and in the Lord's Supper espe-

cially, are always thinking of what you can do for yourselves, and are afraid to come to the Lord until you have made yourselves feel exactly as you ought to feel, and do exactly as you ought to do, you will be like Hezekiah when Hezekiah thought, by his silver and gold, to escape his enemies. Be you like Hezekiah in his wiser mood; and I say to all who are not leading immoral lives, come boldly, come with confidence, and throw yourself with sure trust upon the Lord; come to Him in all the ordinances; come especially in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, come in the name of Him who received you as His own in baptism; and that which you cannot do for yourselves the Lord will do for you. Inquire of the Lord, as Hezekiah did; and as he did, so will you receive an answer of mercy. Seek unto the Lord, and, His Spirit purifying your souls, ye will become as an epistle of Christ, wherein men will read the power of Divine grace in changing the heart of stone into a heart of flesh. Do your duty; go round about the walls of Sion, strengthen her stakes,

and arm her bulwarks, and trust in the Lord, as Hezekiah did, and then, when the pestiferous simoom of infidelity shall sweep over the land; while the enemies of the Lord will be dead corpses, morally defunct, you will be able to go on your way rejoicing in the strength of Him who is your Lord, in whom alone you trust, who is your all in all, to whom only you look as your support here, your salvation hereafter.

JEREMIAH AND BARUCH.

"And there were added besides unto them many like words."
JEREMIAH xxxvi. 32.

BARUCH, the friend and amanuensis of Jeremiah, was directed in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, to write all the prophecies of Jeremiah, delivered up to that period, and to read them to the people, which he did from a window in the Temple on two solemn occasions.

But where was Jeremiah himself? Why did the prophet depute his friend to do what, to all appearance, might have been done better by himself?

Let us look to that portion of Jeremiah's history which is afforded us in the 26th chapter of this book.

"In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the Lord, saying, Thus saith the

Lord; Stand in the courts of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the Lord's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: if so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent Me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord; If ye will not hearken unto Me, to walk in My law, which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of My servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened: then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth. So the priests and the prophets and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the Lord. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people

took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. . . . . Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears."

So Jeremiah was under sentence of death, and the people were infuriated against him.

Through the personal influence of one or two of the princes, especially of Ahikam, his life indeed had been spared, but still he was in so much danger from the animosity of his opponents that it would have been imprudent for him to appear in public.

This prudence was indeed one of the marks of Jeremiah's piety, as well as his wisdom.

Our life and health are not our own. We are stewards of God, and to Him we are accountable for the preservation of the life

which He has given us until the time shall come when He shall Himself take it.

We have no right to expose our life to unnecessary danger; and in the discharge of our duty we are to exercise our judgment to the best of our ability as to what it is necessary for us under circumstances of peril to do or to abstain from doing. It is our duty to take care of our health, and if health be destroyed by our own vices or by our neglect, through intemperance, or through want of cleanliness, or through any other cause over which we have had control, we shall have to render an account for our sin in this respect at the day of judgment. If, through ambition, we deny our body the necessary rest in order that we may unduly prolong the hours of study, or if, through appetence for gain, we force those who are under us to work too long, thereby destroying their health, we are as stewards wasting our master's property, and our master will require it of our hands.

Men have been known to thrust themselves into danger, and in the early ages of the Church

fanatics sought to become martyrs, but they sinned in what they did. They acted as if their lives were their own, on the very principle of the suicide, and sought not God's glory but their own.

If, on the contrary, the work imposed upon us by the providential circumstances under which we are placed cannot be done without sacrifice of health or even loss of life, then that sacrifice must be made and that loss must be sustained. A soldier is not unnecessarily to expose himself to danger, but when the word of command is given to march against the enemy, then no fear of wounds or death may deter him. A physician or a minister of the gospel is not to rush into a city of the plague, and he who wilfully does so, tempts God and transgresses his duty; but when the plague comes to his own city, then no fear of death or of any other evil consequences is to prevent him from attending the sick and the dying.

If Jeremiah could *not* have obtained the services of a Baruch, then Jeremiah would have exposed himself to the danger which threatened

him; but when Baruch could do as well as he could have done himself, and perhaps more effectually, the work which in God's name was to be done, then to Baruch Jeremiah consigned the work, and the honour which attended the performance of it.

Let us always bear this in mind—we are to do our duty, fearless of consequences, but it is part of our duty not to expose ourselves to unnecessary danger; and though health is to be sacrificed if the circumstances of duty require it, still, when it is possible, health is to be preserved by occasional recreation, relaxation, and rest, as well as by temperance in all things.

I have said that Baruch could probably perform the work in hand better than Jeremiah himself.

Had Jeremiah appeared in public, the people would have been so exasperated that they would not even have heard him; for he would have come before them as one under sentence of death, and in defiance of the advice of those powerful friends who would by his conduct

have been equally with himself exposed to danger.

Wisdom and sound policy are parts of piety. We are not only to do the work which is providentially assigned to us, but to do it in the best, that is to say, the most effective, manner.

If the duty we have to perform is an unpleasant duty, if it be to warn the wicked, as in the case of Jeremiah, we should seek to perform it in a manner least likely to give offence. We should deliberate and take counsel upon this point, and act accordingly.

When you see a man by his manners or by his mode of doing what it is his duty to do, or by his dress, or by propounding paradoxes, evidently desiring to astonish or to offend his neighbours—that man is not a pious man; though he speak for God, yet he is seeking not God's glory but his own.

We are never to shrink from a duty, however unpleasant, but we are to seek to perform that duty in the least unpleasant manner. We are never to shrink from a duty, but we are to seek to perform it not in the manner most honour-

able to ourselves, but in the way in which it can be most profitably discharged towards those for whose benefit it is professedly undertaken.

And so Baruch was commissioned by Jeremiah to act as we have already stated, and he executed his commission with becoming boldness. Like his master, he did not hesitate to do what it was his duty to do, although he risked his life in the performance of it; but, like his master also, when his duty was discharged, he took the proper precautions, and gave heed to the advice of those princes of the people who said unto him, "Go hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be."

And now let us look for instruction to the conduct of the people and their king.

Jeremiah prophesied. He foretold destruction to the city, unless the people amended their ways.

The people would not amend their ways, but, instead of this, determined to silence Jeremiah.

When we calmly and dispassionately con-

sider this subject, can we imagine anything more absurd than this conduct on the part of the people ?

But we find the conduct of their king to be precisely the same.

When the princes of the people informed Jehoiakim of what had been done by Baruch, and that he had written from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words which the Lord had spoken unto him upon a roll of a book, the king caused the roll of the book to be read unto him, and after hearing part of it, he cut it with a penknife and cast it into the fire.

The people would silence Jeremiah ; the king would destroy his prophecies, because what Jeremiah said was acceptable to neither the king nor the people.

They did not deny that Jeremiah was an inspired prophet. No; but they would not heed what the prophet said, and therefore seemed to think that if they prohibited him from speaking, or if they destroyed his book, they would be exempted from responsibility or danger.

Did the circumstance of Jeremiah stating a fact, or of Baruch's recording in a book the statement of the prophet, alter the fact one way or the other?

The fact was this, that the kingdom of Judah would be punished unless the people repented.

Their reception of the truth announced to them by Jeremiah and Baruch might have induced them to amend their ways, and therefore the announcement of the truth was an act of mercy; but whether Jeremiah spake or Baruch wrote, the fact remained the same—the fact that unless the people turned from their sins, the curse of God would rest upon their city.

I say that when we calmly and dispassionately look upon this case, our judgment upon it is decisive and clear, and we pronounce both king and people to have been guilty of an act of folly.

What good was to be done by silencing Jeremiah, or by destroying the book of Baruch?

The decree of God remained, and the question really related not to Jeremiah's speaking

or to Baruch's writing, but to the divine revelation and will.

How full of folly, and yet, as regards the natural man, how natural was this conduct!

It is precisely the conduct which we have so often, even now, to witness and deplore.

Suppose that we lay before you from Scripture what are sometimes called Church principles — those principles of our Reformation which distinguish the Church of England from other Protestant communities.

How are we too often met? Instead of acting like the good Bereans, instead of searching the Scriptures to see whether these things be so as they are stated, an attempt is made to silence the preacher by a reference to consequences. In asserting these truths, it is said, you condemn others who hold all truths but these, and of whose piety there is no question; you condemn other Christian communities.

Now, have we not here precisely the principle of the Jewish people and their king?

Our saying such and such things may be of

use to awaken attention to certain subjects, but the facts are unaltered, let us say what we will. A community of Christians is neither churched nor unchurched by anything we can say; there is the fact—you are a Church or you are not a Church. Search the Scripture and see; by Scripture defend yourself, or by Scripture condemn us. But do not attempt to prevent investigation by threatening the prophet or closing the Bible.

This is again precisely what we have to say in regard to the Athanasian Creed.

Some persons do not deny the truth of the facts therein asserted, and yet they refuse to read it.

Surely the reading of what is true, however unpleasant some persons may think it, is charity to the heretic or the sceptic who hears; whether he is condemned or not, does not depend upon our reading; his condemnation or not, is a fact already determined in the counsels of God.

The people and king of Judah thought it, no doubt, impolitic in Jeremiah to assert what

would give offence and dishearten the people; but before policy is charity.

People, now-a-days, argue in the same way; by such a course, it is said, you will drive some from the Church who might otherwise be your partisans.

But the object is not to make partisans; it is to save and to edify souls by leading them to the truth as it is in Jesus.

The truth, however unpalatable, is to be stated; and though men may at first be startled, yet, if the statement be persevered in, they will be led to inquire.

If a man be dreaming pleasantly, and we see a serpent just about to sting him, it is not real charity to say, Do not disturb him, for he is happy in his ignorance of his danger; but it is our duty to wake him and to warn him, and enable him to take precautions against the danger to which, as a fact, he is exposed.

Just so as regards the Church of Rome—idolatry, image-worship, any approach to this offence is condemned in the second commandment and throughout the Bible.

Nothing can alter the fact. As surely as the kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam was guilty of idolatry, so surely can the sin of idolatry be charged on the Church of Rome; and not less surely is the wrath of God denounced against a people so offending.

What does the Roman Pontiff but imitate the conduct of Jehoiakim, king of Judah? He cuts out of his catechism the second commandment, and withholds the Bible from all except those of whose superstitious reverence for his authority, or of whose unscrupulous partizanship, he is assured.

But whether men silence the prophet when he utters the second commandment, or whether they ban or seal up the Bible, whether they hear or whether they forbear, the fact is still the same—all image-worship, as well as worship offered to any other but only to God, however it may be disguised or explained, is condemned by God, and they who do the sinful act are not under the Divine protection or blessing.

Again, the cold philosopher, complacent in his morality and proud of his virtues, and the

profane or profligate, are found to act upon the very same principle.

The Scriptures universally declare what is so pointedly expressed by St. Paul: "Know ye that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."[1]

I need not tell you how frequently among those who are thus condemned the Bible is, not perhaps actually burned,—though, in the madness of their folly, this has been sometimes done,—but denounced and reviled, and its divinity and inspiration denied; how men are exhorted to free themselves from all moral restraints by rejecting it.

Yes, we see the natural man acting under the Christian dispensation precisely as he acted under the Jewish.

But why should you seek to destroy the Bible? Why should you seek to silence the preacher? Why raise a persecution against the believer?

[1] 1 Cor. vi. 9-10.

The fact remains the same whether you believe it or not. It is either a fact that they who commit the sins of sensuality, indignity, or selfishness, will be condemned eternally, or it is a fact that they will not be condemned. The Bible and the preacher do not alter the fact, or make the fact.

The words of Jeremiah were fearfully fulfilled. And fearfully fulfilled the denunciations of Scripture against all wickedness will undoubtedly be. All that the Bible and the preacher asks of thee, O sinner! is to think of these things, to see thy danger in time, and to seek the salvation which is within thy reach. "Thus saith the Lord, Speak unto the people all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word: if so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent Me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings."

O, sinner! however hardened, thou canst at least make the attempt. It is assured that thou hast this power. Thou canst not, indeed,

save thyself. No; that is impossible; but thou canst refrain from doing acts of sin. And until thou dost attempt to break off thy sinful habits, there is no hope for thy salvation.

They who believe the Scriptures to be the word of God are very urgent, not only because they have God's command upon them, but also for thy poor soul's sake to make this truth known. Wilt thou turn round and scoff at the preacher and blaspheme the word of God?

Well, then, the time is short. We are not arguing to establish opinion; we are speaking to save souls; you will find, alas! too soon, what the truth is. And if this warning be another warning neglected, thou wilt find in the book of thy condemnation, besides the words already written, others of still more fearful import.

And let the cold and calculating moralist, who has not committed such offences against morality as those to which we have referred, because, probably, he has not been tempted, or because he has intellect sufficient to choose between such sin, and the superiority and better

policy of virtue, so that he may secure the enjoyments of life; let the cold and calculating moralist be warned, lest he, too, be found committing that selfsame offence to which I have been calling your attention.

Pride of heart and pride of virtue, as well as passions unrestrained, may destroy a man. And man's morality cannot save him.

Man is a fallen creature. A creature fallen to such a position that he cannot, even if he had the will, obey the Creator, is condemned by infinite justice. Until justice be satisfied, God would be dethroning Himself if He pardoned a sinner. Hence it was that the mighty plan of man's redemption was devised.

The Holy Trinity devised the wondrous plan, which was accomplished when the Eternal Father sent His only-begotten and co-eternal Son to make satisfaction to the Law, which requires undeviating obedience from the creature; and when God the Son—a body having been prepared for Him in the fulness of time—without ceasing to be God, became man also, and made the atonement upon the cross.

Now mercy has scope to operate since justice is satisfied.

But it is decreed in the councils of the Most High that man must accept or acquiesce in the Divine plan of salvation; he must by faith accept the Saviour, and acknowledge that salvation is owing to the merits, not of man, but of the Saviour only, if eternal life is to be obtained.

Hence the Bible teaches that there is none other name but that of Jesus through which we can be saved; and the one end of every preacher is to bring men to Christ. Both Bible and preacher incessantly exhort us—Come to Jesus. Leave off sinning; but beware that this cannot blot out the past or satisfy the requisitions of the law,—Come to Jesus; repent and believe.

And what are those persons doing who, proud of the virtue of their own imaginary deserts, trust in themselves that they are righteous, or sufficiently righteous?

They approve of the Bible, they tell us; they admire the purity of its teaching and the power of its instruction.

But see them eliminate that great fundamental truth, that man is a fallen creature, and Jesus, by His blood-shedding, the only Saviour; see how they explain away every mystery connected with this great fact; hear them deny the grand distinguishing work of God the blessed Trinity, of the Father in accepting, the Son in effecting, and the Holy Ghost in administering, the atonement; mark how they contemn, if they do not revile, the preachers of the humiliating doctrine, as they lie prostrate at the foot of the cross.

And by explaining away the truths of Scripture, and by causing the Bible to appear to say what it does not say, they as effectually destroy the Bible as Jehoiakim did when he cut up the roll of the book with his pen-knife.

The Bible is as much destroyed by those who explain away its doctrines, as it is by those who cut it with a penknife or cast it into the fire.

Far different, my brethren, may it be with us. Let us search the Scriptures for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in

righteousness; let us search them prayerfully, and then, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we shall possess a knowledge of ourselves and of God, our Saviour, we shall repent of our wickedness in His sight, and be cleansed from all our sins in the blood of His Son.

SWEET CANE.

"Thou hast bought me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sin."

ISAIAH xliii. 24, 25.

IN dwelling upon this passage of Holy Scripture we must first consider the ground on which Israel is reproached—"Thou hast bought Me no sweet cane with money, neither hast thou filled Me with the fat of thy sacrifices"—and then by regarding the concluding verses of the passage from a Christian point of view, we shall see how emphatically applicable to our own case is the principle upon which the reproach is grounded.

I. Now, before we can understand the reproach of Israel, we must explain the terms employed by the prophet and the customs to which he refers.

What is meant by the sweet cane? and what by the fat of the sacrifices?

Now, sweet cane, or calamus, is an aromatic reed which was an exotic in Palestine, and is chiefly to be found in India.

Its fragrance is such that it is, even at the present time, in high esteem in eastern lands. It is spoken of by Jeremiah and Ezekiel as coming from a far country, and as being an article of commerce.

The demand for sweet cane was great because it formed an ingredient of the incense in most countries where incense was used.

And before the coming of our Lord the burning of incense formed a portion of the public worship amongst almost every nation of the world, because amongst almost every nation animal sacrifice prevailed, and wherever animal sacrifice prevailed, incense was absolutely necessary in order to counteract the offensive effluvium which was occasioned by the rite, and which would have been otherwise intolerable. To the grateful odour of the sanctuary and to the fragrance of the priestly vestments there are

frequent allusions in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, both under the Levitical and under the Patriarchal dispensations.

We see, then, why sweet cane, from its peculiar and excessive fragrance, should be in demand, and why, being brought from a far distance, it should be a costly article: a fact implied in the expression, "Thou hast bought Me no sweet cane with *money*." It was one of those things which could not be obtained by barter. And in countries where money was scarce, it was by barter that the ordinary articles of consumption were procured.

And now we pass on to that other expression in our text, which also requires explanation, "Neither hast thou filled Me with the fat of thy sacrifices."

Now, the fat of the immolated victim was, in all propitiatory sacrifices, the very part which was offered to the Lord. To have said, therefore, that *no* fat was offered would have been to imply the absence of all sacrifice, which was not the charge here brought against the people.

But because the fat was the portion which,

in propitiatory sacrifice, was presented unto the Lord, while the rest was consumed by the persons who offered the sacrifice, the word fat came to signify, in the Hebrew, anything that was most valuable and precious.

Thus, in the 16th verse of the 81st Psalm, of which our translation is, "He should have fed thee with the finest of wheat," it is in the original, "the fat of wheat." In like manner, we read of fat pastures and fat valleys, and "good report maketh the heart fat."

From what has been said, you will perceive at once that there is no reference, in our text, to those sacrifices which were symbolical of the atonement; the reference is to the free-will offerings, which, in a subordinate sense, were spoken of as sacrifices — sacrifices of thanksgiving.

The charge, then, brought against Israel in this portion of our text was only an emphatic repetition, after the Hebrew manner, of that which had been already made.

You do not neglect the offices of religion, but you perform them carelessly; you do not

withhold your offerings, but you do not offer of your best.

Bad is the best that man has to offer to God; but less than our best God will not accept.

But, my brethren, it is very seldom that any except the desperately depraved and the daringly wicked are unable to discover a plausible reason for a neglect of duty, or a specious vindication of their evil conduct; and the Israelites had their excuse.

In the Book of Exodus minute directions are given with reference to the manufacture of incense, and among these minute directions no mention of sweet cane is to be found.

The Israelites, when reproached, therefore, had this to say in their defence: "We do precisely what our fathers did, and what the law requires; why, then, if they were uncensured, and the law is not violated, are we to be blamed?"

They chose to forget that they themselves were no longer what their fathers had been, and that what sufficed for a wandering tribe, and what was required of them, when their

means of acquiring anything were scant, was insufficient when Israel had now become a great and wealthy nation, when her kings and her princes dwelt in palaces, and her citizens possessed their ceiled houses; and under these circumstances, the omission of the sweet cane from the incense offered to the Lord was noticed; even for this reason, that the absence of it was an indication of the absence of loyalty and love from the hearts of the people.

Loyalty and love are not contented with the mere requirements of the law; they are eager to display themselves by spontaneous acts of devotion.

Suppose the Queen were to visit our thriving and populous town, would she be satisfied with receiving the homage of the municipal authorities, and with the attendance of the chief authorities of the county, civil, ecclesiastical, and military? These attentions she would have a right to demand; and on that very account, to show the reality of your loyalty and love, triumphal arches would be erected, and crowds would flock together from all the

places round about, while the town would be illuminated, and the poor feasted; you would drown the national anthem by your shouts.

Unless she received such demonstrations of affection, she would leave you with a wounded spirit, and her people would have been justly liable to reproach, because such conduct would have betokened a disloyal spirit, or, at least, a people wanting in affection to one under whose patriotic rule the nation has reached a height of prosperity never before attained.

Now this, my brethren, was precisely the character of the complaint which Jehovah, King of kings, and Lord of lords, addressed through His prophets to His people Israel.

The words of our text are not the stern condemnation of a judge. They are the loving complaint of the King of righteousness to an ungrateful people.

If you loved me, He seems to say, you would measure your duty not by what your fathers did, when they were unable to do more, by what the law demands, but by what you yourselves have the ability to do.

II. And now, because this mode of reasoning must speak with force ten thousand times the greater when applied to the Christian heart, I proceed to recall your attention to the concluding verses of our text: "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Brethren,—it is Jehovah who speaks. The words are the words of the living God.

And when did the King eternal, immortal, invisible, serve? When was God, the Omnipotent, wearied with our iniquities? When did the Judge of the earth blot out our sins?

We, enlightened by the gospel, can give an answer, which Israel of old could *not*. We answer Then, when "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us;"[1] then, when the great mystery of godliness was revealed, and "God was manifest in the flesh;"[2] then, when He "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, made Himself of

[1] St. John i. 14. [2] Gal. iv. 4.

no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in likeness of men;"[1] when God in the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity became incarnate.

I need not dwell long on this subject, ever nearest to the heart which has been sanctified by the Spirit and renewed by grace.

God, as the sovereign ruler of the universe, could not pardon the human race, unless, for upholding and magnifying the law, something were done equivalent to our condemnation—the otherwise inevitable consequence of transgression.

And the law was more magnified than it could have been through the annihilation of every created intelligence, by God's own obedience to it—"God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself."[2]

To magnify the law, God, in the second Person of the Trinity, was incarnate: "I come," He said, "not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me."[3] He came, that is, to serve, and when we think of Him, the God-man,

[1] Phil. ii. 6, 7. [2] 2 Cor. v. 19. [3] St. John vi. 38.

when we think of our dear Lord and Master Jesus Christ serving under the law; wearied by His long waiting of thirty years in obscurity until His call came; wearied in His labours, not having, ofttimes, where on earth to lay His precious head; wearied by the blasphemy of His enemies; wearied even by His disciples, through their slowness of heart; wearied by bearing our griefs, carrying our sorrows, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities—why then, my brother, the words of our text, "Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities"—the words of our text, "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions, and will not remember thy sins,"—cease to be what they appeared to Israel of old, a figure of speech almost hyperbolical; they are, as the Christian perceives, literally true. And is it possible for him who believes this to ask, in the spirit of a slave, How *little* can I render unto the Lord for all His benefits, what is the *least* that He demands, the minimum of duty? Will he not rather say, How much will my God condescend

to accept? Yes, his is the zeal, the obedience of an ever ready love—the child's desire to evince his wish to please the Father he adores.

That the Lord still loves the willing giver, that He will, under the New Testament, as well as under the Old, mark the absence of the sweet cane, is made known to us by what occurred in the house of Simon of Bethany.

Proud and lordly though the Pharisee was, yet Simon was distinguished from his party by his receiving the lowly Jesus, despised and rejected of men, as his guest.

But his feeling was probably this: "Jesus of Nazareth is doing mighty works, such as the prophets predicted the Messiah would perform. He may be the Messiah, and therefore I will seek His favour."

But if the Lord Jesus were worthy to be received at all, He ought to have been received not only as a Prophet, not only as a Priest, but also as a King.

But no, Simon imagined that he did enough when he entertained Him at all; there was a simplicity in his entertainment which, however,

would not have existed if Annas, or Caiaphas, or Herod, or Pontius Pilate, had been his guest.

There was *food* enough, but not the tokens of respect which the customs of the country had required. He did, in point of fact, even more than Abraham had done when entertaining our Lord before His incarnation in the plains of Mamre. But the patriarchal simplicity was not now sufficient, and the proud Pharisee was rebuked by the lowly penitent; the love, the gratitude which flowed in her heart, made that heart indignant at the simplicity of Simon's entertainment. She determined that the Lord, when attending a banquet, and upon a public occasion, should be treated as Simon himself would have treated royalty; she bought ointment with money, very precious ointment—so precious that it was in an alabaster box—and with it she anointed our Master's feet. In that alabaster box of very precious ointment there must have been sweet cane: there was no lack of sweet cane where there was no lack of loyalty and love.

My brethren, the simplicity of the ancients

is not to be imitated, except by men as simple as they were.

When men talk of simplicity, let them, for consistency's sake, first act upon this principle of simplicity in their homes and their domestic arrangements.

But then, if this were done, the artist and the artizan, the merchant and the tradesman, the man of literature and science would cease to exist, and society would collapse into barbarism. And this the Lord does not intend, for civilisation, as all experience shows, is the handmaid, and frequently the preserver, of Christianity.

We do not wish to see the primitive simplicity established in your domestic arrangements; we do not wish to see you reduced to the position of our rude forefathers, when, as it is beautifully said:—

"Few were their wants, and these, while roaming wide,
The chase, the wood's wild fruits, the stream, supplied.
Their only garb some vanquished wolf's rough hide,
Which left their naked sinewy limbs to view,
With uncouth emblems traced, and stained of skiey hue."

But if, when the Lord has blessed our exer-

tions in art, in science, in commerce, and in trade, we apply the result of our success, in the various departments of industry, to our domestic arrangements, so that in modern times there is more of elegance and comfort to be found in the abode of a private citizen than there was formerly in the palace of a king, we should reflect upon the rebuke which our text was intended to convey to Israel, if we are tempted only to begrudge the expense when the object is to make God's house what it ought to be, and to maintain the institutions endowed by the piety of our ancestors for conducting the services therein in such a manner as may suggest the grand idea of public worship to those who are prepared with angels, and archangels, and all the company of heaven, to pay their homage, as loyal subjects, to the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Holy Spirit, being God, can be with His servants everywhere—in the lion's den, in the dungeons of a prison, in the catacomb, in the upper room.

But we are not to forget that when Chris-

tians were wont to assemble in an upper room, they had themselves no houses to dwell in; they were wandering outcasts of society, as the primitive Israelites had been in the wilderness. When they offered their devotions in whispers, and had no instruments of music in their places of worship, they were men whose very lives became, as it were, the sweet cane; for it was at the peril of their lives that they worshipped God at all. Food is food wherever taken; it sustains life and keeps the body and soul together. But it does not follow that because it will answer its purpose in the hut of the Esquimaux, we are to prefer the hut to a mansion, or raw food to dressed.

The church of the missionary is still a tent, and the church of a village, where there are none but poor, need be but little better than a barn.

God is there. But will He still be there, not as an offended God, but as the King of kings and Lord of lords, if the church still remains as a barn, when the cottages have grown into mansions, and when, by His good-

ness, the poor persons have risen to comparative wealth?

Our text gives the answer.

Whether we look to our ecclesiastical buildings or to the divine offices performed therein, the question relates not to simplicity, but to their being the best of their kind which our means can procure.

The great principle is this: that we never offer unto the Lord what costs us nothing, or what involves no thought or trouble. He will not accept the refuse at our hands.

And this principle we are to carry out in all that relates to our moral conduct and religious life. It is applicable to our private devotions as well as to our public services. It is implied in our Lord's injunction: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness."

Every respectable person living in a Christian land will seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness when religious duties happen not to be inconvenient, or when they occasion pleasurable excitement, or when, instead of interfering, they concur with their worldly

interests and pursuits; that is to say, my brethren, when they are in the second place.

But, my brethren, remember that it is when our worldly interests and our religious duties seem to clash that the question really occurs, which is our *first* care, our *first* thought, our *first* action?

Although we do not neglect our religious duties, yet, if they be to us only, as is too often the case, a secondary consideration, the sweet cane is absent.

The Lord God Almighty will not accept the mind already wearied or dissipated by the things of this world; He will not accept the few spare moments which lassitude may place at our disposal—the refuse of time when we can no longer work—the dregs of the mind when we can no longer think—the exhausted spirit when prayer, if uttered, is uttered without fervour, and the heart is far away.

How many a soul is damaged, if not destroyed, by a forgetfulness of this, by want of remembering that in all things God requires the sweet cane.

A young man who begins life with religious principles becomes, after a time, immersed in the affairs of the world.

Observe him. He does not neglect the reading of the Bible or the hearing of the word; but he has no mind sufficiently disengaged to mark, to learn, and inwardly to digest it. He says his prayers, but he has little time to spare, and he says them hastily, carelessly. He has not been absent from church, except when very busy; his body, however, has been often there when his heart is far away. The Lord's table, it is not entirely neglected—no, but by degrees the attendance has become less and less frequent—and now the end arrives. He is on his deathbed. He looks back upon the past. His last end, he is conscious, is worse than the beginning. There has been religion, but it has always been a secondary consideration; there has been incense, but no sweet cane. The Spirit of God has been grieved; the Spirit hath been done despite unto. Has the Holy Spirit been quenched in that poor sinner's soul? Who can tell? It is an awful thought.

"My son," saith the Lord, "give Me thine heart." Nothing less will suffice. It is the sweet cane.

When the heart is right, when it has been created anew by the Spirit of God, then, brethren, the Lord will hear us when we say with the Psalmist, "Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the incense, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice."

The burning of incense has ceased in the Church; it ceased with the cessation of animal sacrifices. It was a thing unknown in the primitive Church—the burning of incense. It was one of the useless ceremonies introduced in the Middle Ages, and having been abused to superstition, it was wisely discarded at the Reformation.

But the words of the Psalmist just quoted enable us to interpret the prediction of Malachi, and from the rising up of the sun to the going down of the same, the name of the Lord is magnified, and with the pure offering of a regenerated heart, incense, even prayer and praise, is offered.

Yes, if the sweet cane be present, then, whether we pray to God as children to our Father in private, whether we seek a family blessing from the Divine Master, in whom all the families of the earth are blessed, or whether in the great congregation with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven, we laud and magnify the King of kings, the Lord of hosts, our great high priest, the Lord Jesus Christ, is ever standing in the Divine presence with His golden censer, and He, the prevailing Intercessor, offers those prayers and praises as incense before the golden altar, sprinkled with the blood of the immaculate Lamb.

CHRIST, THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine. As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down My life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd.

JOHN X. 11-16.

THE general meaning of this parable was understood when it was delivered by our Lord, and is intelligible now, even to the cursory reader; but look upon it in detail, and examine each separate sentence, and they who not only hear and read, but also inwardly digest the Scriptures, perceive at once a reference to some of the mysteries of the gospel,—the deeper truths of revelation.

I. With respect to the hireling shepherd, no reflection is cast on the circumstance of his being an hireling,—for "the labourer is worthy of his hire."

It is not implied that he neglected his duty before the appearance of the wolf.

The difficulties of a shepherd in the wilderness at the south of Palestine were many and great.

The hireling shepherd had to meet them.

The sheep in oriental lands is, as the dog with us, the chosen companion of man, upon whom man exercises that instinctive affection by which we are inclined to extend kindness and protection to animated creation of a degree lower than our own. The sheep are not driven, as with us, but led; they come when they are called; they are handled and fondled.

There was no lack of this sort of affection to his flock on the part of the hireling shepherd.

All is right up to a certain point.

But the wolf cometh; danger approacheth; and then he fleeth.

And why? Simply "because he is an hireling, whose own the sheep are not."

The sheep are not his; they are not his property; and, so far as he is concerned, it is better that his master should lose his sheep than that he, the hireling, should stand a chance of losing his life.

He permitted himself to be hired, for his own sake, for his livelihood, for his comfort and support; he did not undertake the shepherd's office from any care he had for what did not belong to himself; and it is only what any one would expect,—that he should think of his own life before taking care of another man's sheep.

Alas! poor hireling; he thought only of self; and, by his thought of self, his life was for a short season saved, yet, in the end, he must have perished.

His business as a shepherd is over. Who will hire him when it is known that he fleeth, instead of defending the sheep, when the wolf cometh? Without employment, he could only fly into the wilderness, there again,

perhaps, to encounter the wolf, or to die of starvation.

Observe, then, my brethren, the fault of the hireling,—the evil principle which caused his failure in duty, and his cowardice in danger.

Self: he thought only of self. He is the personification of selfishness,—that principle of the natural man which, looking only to self, leads in the end to self-misery and destruction.

II. And now, in the next place, let us look to the good shepherd; the shepherd who is not a hireling.

Such a one there was on those plains of Bethlehem two thousand nine hundred years ago, and he describes his conduct, speaking thus to his king: "Thy servant kept his father's sheep, and there came a lion, and a bear,"—fiercer animals than a wolf,—"and took a lamb out of the flock: and I went out after him, and smote him, and delivered it out of his mouth: and when he arose against me, I caught him by his beard, and smote him, and slew him. Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear."[1]

[1] 1 Sam. xvii. 34-36.

Up to a certain point there was no difference discernible between the hireling shepherd and the true shepherd. Both watched their flocks by day and night. Both, no doubt, carried their lambs in their bosom, and called their sheep by name. Both expected to be rewarded for their pains. But the hour of difficulty and danger came, and then the hireling fled because he was a hireling; but David bravely faced the danger, and for the sheep he staked his life,—and why?

We have the reason in the opening words of his speech, "Thy servant kept his father's sheep." The sheep formed the family wealth. David and Jesse were, in this respect, one: the sheep were David's; he cared for the sheep; he cared for his father; he cared for his father's house; and from love, love to all, he, with a generous spirit, encountered the danger.

He thought not of self. He thought of the general good; but in the general good his own good was also involved.

The same generous spirit attended David throughout his life.

When Goliath challenged the armies of Israel, the servants of Saul dared not to peril their lives, but again did David risk his life, because in the challenge of the giant of Gath David discerned that his heavenly Father was dishonoured; that they who were defied were the armies, not of Saul, but of the living God. From love to God and man, therefore, he went forth, a youth with a sling, against the giant who, from his youth, had been a man of war.

The same generous and unselfish spirit led him to spare King Saul, even when Saul's death would have assured the throne to himself; and in the same spirit he was always first and foremost in the post of danger. He did not disregard self, but he considered what was due to others, and identified his own interests with theirs.

And in the general welfare he found his reward. In the wealth of his father's house he shared; in the spoils of the Philistines he divided the prey; in the glories of Israel he had the most glorious part.

Self was benefited even in the cultivation of an unselfish spirit. And David was a type of Him—the Divine Shepherd, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself.

III. And now, my brethren, we are led to advert to Him who saith, "I am the Good Shepherd"—the Shepherd emphatically. When our blessed Lord and dear Master Jesus Christ thus describes Himself, we are apt, as I have said, to imagine that we at once understand His meaning, but if we go beneath the surface, there are what must remain as mysteries to the uninitiated, and are only revelations to those who have accepted the gospel in all its fulness of grace, and whose minds are expanded to the whole truth as it is in Jesus.

a. For example, in the passage before us, what does our Lord mean when He saith, "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father."

As the knowledge of the Father is infinite, and as the knowledge must be infinite of Him who knoweth the Father, as He by the Father is known, and as there cannot be two infinities,

this is one of those many passages which speak sense to those only who believe that in the one Godhead there are three Persons of one substance, power, and eternity—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost—and that when the Second Person in the one Godhead was incarnate, He became man without ceasing to be God; "for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ."

b. But then comes another question—Why should there be this reference to our Lord's Divinity in this passage in which our Lord speaks of Himself as the Good Shepherd? Where is the connection?

The point here dwelt upon especially is the sacrificial character of our Lord's death, and the enlightened Christian assigns the reason, and points out the connection at once.

The allusion is to the sacrificial character of our Lord's death.

And the sacrificial character of our Lord's death depends upon His Divinity.

You will bear in mind what I frequently refer to, the principle of the atonement.

The interests of the universal empire of God—regarded as King of kings and Lord of lords, the Ruler of all intellectual creatures, of the universe of sentient being,—presented an impediment to the gratuitous pardon of man.

Angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven were interested in the maintenance of that law which connects life and happiness with obedience to the Divine will.

And God, therefore, magnified the law by His own obedience to it before relaxing its penalties in favour of penitent mankind.

Thus, as I have said, the atonement depends upon the fact that it was made by God incarnate.

And we understand the subject by never forgetting that angels and all the hosts of heaven are, though in a different way, as much interested in the wondrous fact as man.

They, with us, adore Him who is love itself. They see the Divine love in the justice of God, we in His mercy. Infinite justice, infinite mercy—this is that Divine love, which was manifested to the universe, when the Divine Shepherd gave His life for the sheep.

And this, my brethren, explains that other passage in our text in which our Lord saith, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd."

Who the sheep are whom our Lord will bring with Him, our Lord Himself tells us when He saith, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels." And again, "When the Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory;"[1] then,—that is to say, the great work of redemption being completed,—man, to whom He came, and angels, whom He will bring, shall be one fold under one shepherd.

There is, no doubt, an allusion to the call of the Gentiles in this passage, but this is not exclusive of the higher meaning which the sense of the passage requires—God incarnate to atone; and by the atonement reconciling heaven to earth and earth to heaven.

[1] Matt. xvi. 27; xxv. 31.

We know how the wolf came down upon the Divine Shepherd; even Satan, with powers beyond the reach of human thought.

We see him in the wilderness of the temptation; we see him in the hearts of the Pharisees and Sadducees; we see him in the soul of Judas; we behold him tempting the apostles almost to their ruin, adding speed to their feet as they forsook their Lord and fled; we tremble at his presence when, in Gethsemane, his attack upon the Lord of life was so fierce that the blessed Jesus exclaimed, "Father, if it be possible"—possible according to that plan of salvation I have come to accomplish—"let this cup pass from Me;" we hear him in the hellish cry, "Crucify Him, crucify Him;" we see him vanquished when the great work of redemption was finished upon the cross, when the wolf and lion, and the bear and the great dragon were slain by the sacrificial death of Him—the Good Shepherd, the Divine Shepherd—who laid down His life for the sheep.

IV. And so, my brethren, we proceed to

our last point by repeating to you our Lord's words, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine."

Yes, the Lord Jesus Christ died for all; but all, alas! will not be saved. Salvation is offered to all; but by how many is that salvation rejected, and by how many more treated only as a matter of secondary importance, and so neglected. The Lord knows who will accept and who reject Him.

Are we, my brethren, let me ask, His people and the sheep of His pasture?

We must seek our answer by adverting to the fourth verse of this chapter, from which our text is taken, "And when He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, for they know His voice."

Are we, my brethren, followers of the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He our model in thought as well as in action? Are we prepared to hear and hearken to His voice?

What is that voice as bearing upon our present subject?

Hear the voice of the Lord as recorded by

the beloved disciple: "A new commandment I give you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye love one another." [1]

The same Divine principle which actuated our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, must animate the hearts also of those who follow Him, and would keep His commandments.

But we must go deeper into the matter than this.

Why did David risk his life for his sheep? The sheep being his father's were his own; for he was one with his father.

And our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ teacheth us that in a yet higher sense, though in sense which includes this, He and His Father are one.

Their will, their object is the same—the well-being of everything that exists; and the prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ for His people is: "Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me"—those whom the Shepherd knows, "that they may be one, as we are." [2]

[1] St. John xiii. 34. [2] St. John xvii. 11.

To be united to God through Jesus the only Mediator, this is the first thing that we are to desire, when we are awakened to a sense of religion.

I am not about to say what this implies in all the fulness of the meaning, but as bearing upon our present subject, it implies that we are to desire and endeavour to promote the good of all, so far as we have the opportunity. We are to regard self as part of the whole—but ever to be ready to sacrifice self, when by self-sacrifice we can promote God's glory, or really benefit our fellow-creatures.

This is the new heart, the vital principle of Christianity; as martyrs have attested by their blood. It is called by St. Paul charity, or love, emphatically, Divine love.

And so vital is its character, that, without it, Christian action cannot exist. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I

have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."[1]

It is this charity which distinguishes the true shepherd from the hireling: the actions may be the same, but the great question is, On what principle do we act?

The hireling, as we have seen, prefigures the natural man: the man not under grace. And he may be performing with regularity the duties of his station; he may be amiable in his family, he may have a high character for integrity and honour; and, enjoying the sentimentalities of religion, he may be called a religious enthusiast.

All this is well, as far as it goes, but how is it when the wolf comes?

In the natural man, individuality predominates; his ideas do not extend beyond himself. Self-gratification, self-interest is his principle. His very religion is selfish; he seeks only the

[1] 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3.

indulgence of his enthusiastic or, it may be, intolerant, feelings for the present; he has no thought of God's glory, and the mighty place in which this glory displays itself; he only cares, if there be a heaven, to secure his own mansion there. And then cometh the wolf.

He sees ruin impending, and what becomes of his sense of duty then? his honour? his integrity? How are thousands ruined by his mis-appropriation of funds, and by the document to which the lying signature is affixed!

His child offends him, takes some course not criminal, but such as interferes with some scheme he has laid for the aggrandisement of his family, and what becomes of his amiability then?

He is zealous in promoting philanthropic measures, for philanthropy has its marketable value; but he is denied the first place, his suggestions are not received as law, or his merits acknowledged as he expected, and what becomes of his benevolence then?

Persecution, either physical or moral, arises, and his religion is then seen to be sentimentality and not a principle.

The great principle of Christianity, that which constitutes the new heart of a Christian, is indeed a gift, an inspiration, a new creation, effected in the soul by Him who only can create.

We are to seek the grace, then, through the means of grace, and by earnest prayer.

But prayer without exertion is mockery. And how are we to exert ourselves in correspondence with our prayer in this respect?

This brings us to our practical point.

We are to encourage in ourselves a public spirit, a spirit which will take interest in matters in which we are not immediately concerned.

Everything which has a tendency to take us out of ourselves, to interest us in something general and common, is of great importance in thus giving exercise to our virtue in this respect. On this account we are glad to see persons rejoicing when others rejoice, or mourning when others are afflicted; the sympathy is generous, disinterested—therefore to be encouraged.

On this account we expect men, when they

cannot give—let us say to missionary, or to any other great Christian work,—at least to pray; to exercise a generous feeling; to encourage their disinterestedness by doing something.

It is especially necessary in a commercial age and among a commercial people, when we are forced to a minute attention to our own concerns, to remind them that Christianity implies the existence of a generous desire to promote the common good, both in things temporal and in things spiritual.

And let me add, that the suspicion that there is among us a tendency to forget this, is perhaps the reason why commercial men, when they are under the influence of Christian principle, are emphatically generous and public-spirited. When we are aware of our danger, we act vigorously in the opposite direction.

It may appear that in saying this I have been addressing you as shepherds instead of sheep.

I address you as both, as sheep and as shepherds, in subordination to the Divine Shepherd.

When we look to our duty, then we are shepherds; when we look to our privileges and blessings, then we change the figure, and compare ourselves to sheep.

Just so, when we speak of the Lord Jesus as the Propitiation for our sins, He is to us the Lamb of God; when we think of Him as our Protector and Saviour, we regard Him as the Good Shepherd.

Hungering and thirsting after righteousness, we, as sheep, look to Him, and He provides us with the richest pasturage, the bread of life, and the waters of salvation. He provides His word, His day, His house, His ministers, His sacraments, His Spirit. Every promise of His word, every ordinance of His house, every preaching of His gospel, every breathing of His Spirit, is as green pasture to the soul. In secret prayer and in searching of the Scriptures, in the devotions of the family and in the house of the Lord, in the hearing of the gospel, in the communion of saints, in the exercise of charity, and in the practice of righteousness, the good Shepherd feeds His

flock: He invigorates, He refreshes their souls. Do any of you, my brethren, who love the Good Shepherd, inquire, with the Church of old, "Tell, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon?"[1] We reply, At the table of the Lord. On the cross His body was broken and His blood shed; that by spiritually eating His flesh and drinking His blood at His table, your souls might be strengthened and refreshed.

[1] Cant. i. 7.

CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE.

"Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."—1 St. Peter ii. 21, 22.

We have been commemorating this morning, in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the meritorious cross and passion of our Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ.

Our text is selected as affording a subject of meditation fitted for those who have been thus employed.

May the Spirit of God be with us while we proceed to consider, first, the sufferings of our Lord, as connected with the fact of His being without sin; secondly, the fact of His sinlessness; and, lastly, the manner in which, by His sufferings, He is an example to us.

I. Now we shall take it for granted that all who study the Scriptures with unprejudiced minds and with prayerful hearts, admit the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered for us by being the propitiation for the sins of the whole world.

But although we know and believe that we are saved by the sufferings of Christ, we are not to suppose that what He endured was in consequence of any delight taken by Him, who is described as the Father of mercies and God of all pity, in witnessing the sufferings of human nature.

The sufferings of our Lord were the necessary and inevitable consequence of His position, when He undertook to be the Redeemer of mankind.

We are expressly told in Scripture that, as "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."[1]

Therefore, while our salvation is specifically described as the effect of our Lord's greatest obedience, that is, His death, yet viewing the subject of redemption generally, our salvation is the fruit of His whole obedience.

This is apparent from the plan itself of salvation, as revealed to the enlightened mind of a Christian in the Scriptures of truth.

[1] Romans v. 19.

The atonement is a plan devised in the counsels of the Most High, even of God the blessed Trinity, to remove the obstacle which was presented to the pardon of the human race when man by transgression fell.

The law to the universe is that of entire submission to the will of the Creator; it is briefly expressed in the formula, This do and live: live and be happy.

This is sometimes called the Covenant of Works.

But here is a creature, man, who has placed himself in such a position as to be unable to yield this entire submission to the will of the Creator.

If he, a disobedient creature, be pardoned, then of what use is the law?

If man be pardoned, pardon must be extended to every other disobedient creature; that is to say, licence must be given to every creature to act as he may please; and so law ceases to be law; the will of the creature prevails over the will of the Creator; and the Creator Himself ceases to be the sovereign ruler of creation.

Man could not therefore be pardoned, unless something were done to render his pardon consistent with the welfare of other creatures, and, so to say, with the safety of the Divine government.

The majesty of the Divine law was to be vindicated before it was possible for man to be pardoned.

And to vindicate the majesty of the law in the eyes of the universe, God determined Himself to be obedient to the law; and thus having vindicated the law, to remove that obstacle which justice interposed to the operation of Divine mercy towards the human race.

But God, regarded in Himself and as respects the Divine nature, could not be the subject of either obedience or of disobedience.

Therefore, to render homage to the law, God, in the second Person of the one Godhead, took our nature upon Him; and, having thus a nature capable of rendering obedience to the law, he obeyed, and His obedience was the obedience of God, because He did not cease to be God when He became man, the natures

being two, but the person in whom they were united one.

"Wherefore," saith the Scripture, "when He," the eternal Son of the Father, the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity, "cometh into the world, He saith, . . . a body Thou hast prepared for Me. . . Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me), to do Thy will, O God."[1]

But, in a world constituted as ours has been since the fall, obedience,—that is, the subjection of our own to the will of a superior,—must imply more or less of suffering.

We are induced to disobey from the very circumstance that obedience involves self-denial, and self-denial must be painful.

Self-denial, again, involves temptation. We can only be said to deny ourselves when we find existing in us a contrariety between our own will and that of God: we are tempted to act on our own will, we triumph by bending our own to the Divine will.

But the more perfect we become, the less

[1] Heb. x. 5-7.

inclination we feel to set up our own will against the will of God.

If, then, a perfect man is to be tempted, he must be subjected to temptations of more than ordinary potency.

Ordinary temptations, it is admitted, will not move him; his obedience must be tested by extraordinary temptations.

We have the principle laid open to us in the Book of Job.

The Almighty said unto Satan, "Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Then Satan answered the Lord, and said, Doth Job fear God for naught? Hast Thou not made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to Thy face. And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not

forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord."[1]

Here we see precisely the argument to which we have alluded; and it is carried farther. Job was deprived of all his worldly goods, and reduced to utter penury and ruin. But still he was obedient. Therefore, in the second chapter of the Book of Job, we find the malignant spirit, alluding to the Divine injunction that upon Job himself the evil spirit might not place his hand, exclaiming: "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse Thee to Thy face,"—that is to say, he must be made to suffer more.

And Satan was permitted still further to tempt Job, whose faith being thus tried and proved, was found laudable, glorious, and honourable, to the increase of his glory and endless felicity.

We see here the whole principle of God's dealings with His Incarnate Son.

The Son of God came to obey; but His

[1] Job i. 8, *seq.*

obedience was to be tested, and His perfect sinlessness could only be brought to the proof by the extremity of suffering.

The accuser might have said, as the caviller does say, It were an easy matter for Him, who was without sin, to resist the ordinary temptations under which ordinary men are found to fall; but the cavil is removed, and it could only be removed by the submission of our Incarnate Lord to every species of torture, both corporeal and mental.

The trial of our Lord commenced with the inactivity and obscurity of the first thirty years of His life on earth.

Those years were passed not only in obscurity, but in poverty the most abject. He who was born in a manger was not likely to find the luxuries of life in the workshop of a poor Galilean carpenter.

Our Lord saw other men busily engaged in improving their condition in life; some in pursuing stations of worldly affluence and honour, and all in securing their present and temporal interests.

Was it, think ye, no temptation to one conscious of power, such as the Lord Jesus possessed—regarding our Lord in His human character, the character in which He was tempted—to perform a miracle, if not to rescue Himself from the inconveniences of His earthly circumstances, yet to free His mother from the privations of poverty?

Was there no temptation to exert His miraculous powers to relieve the wants of others? to heal diseases and to cast out devils?

During the thirty years of His obscurity, our compassionate Master was surrounded by sufferers, yet no miracle was wrought upon them; He had opportunities of preaching the Gospel, but, according to prophecy, He did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. [1]

Doubtless it was painful to Him, as it is painful to every active and generous mind, conscious of powers of usefulness, to remain inactive; but He has shown to us that the question man is to ask, is not, How can I be most useful? but simply, What is my duty?

[1] Isaiah xii. 2.

It was His duty not to exercise His miraculous gifts until the time came for the commencement of His ministry; and the painful duty He performed.

And with His ministry commenced the more active temptations of our artful enemy.

Satan tried our Lord when he saw Him weak through His long fast; he tempted Him to presumption; he placed before Him the allurements of ambition.

We may add that Satan was ever busy to prevent our Lord's teaching from having even apparent success during His life on earth; for the result of our Lord's teaching, when His time for suffering the pangs of death had arrived, were only visible in eleven apostles, seventy disciples, and a few poor women of Galilee. Surely this was a temptation to murmur and to complain. How many are seen to cease from activity when their exertions are apparently without success!

Many a one in his disappointment would have said, Mine is a useless life; I fail in all that I undertake; the sooner my life ends the better for me and for others.

Not so our holy Lord and Saviour. He was careful to preserve His life; He conveyed Himself out of the hands of His enemies, not considering His time to have come, so long as it was still possible to test His obedience, or for His human nature to endure more. He waited patiently till His exhausted human frame was incapable of further trial.

As that end drew nigh, the malice of the tempter became more energetic and vindictive.

Not only was our Lord's obedience tested by all that could be brought to bear upon the sinless infirmities of human nature, to which He had subjected Himself; not only was He weary and faint, but He was exposed to calumny and insult; He was treated as a malefactor, bound as a thief, mocked as an imposter, reckoned worse than a murderer, deemed unfit to live. He was blindfolded, beaten, and derided. He hid not His face from spitting, and turned not His cheek from those who plucked off the hair.

Yet was He obedient still; in His obedience sinless and perfect.

But what was worse to bear than this—the

deep affections of His pure and sensitive nature were harrowed and lacerated. He was betrayed by a friend and sold to His enemies by one whom He trusted. In the hour of His greatest need, it is said of His nearest and dearest friends, "They all forsook Him and fled." He stood alone in the world—rejected, despised, forlorn.

But yet further, that His obedience might be tested to the very uttermost, He was subjected to all the horrors of spiritual destitution. How awful must have been the agony which caused Him to pray, "If it be possible," consistently, that is, with the plan of salvation, "let this cup pass from Me;" how complete the triumph when the human will was brought into submission to the Divine will by the words, "Father, not My will, but Thine be done."

He was obedient unto death, but even His death was not an ordinary death; it was a death the most ignominious, the spiritual destitution remaining to the last.

But by His death it was finished. Until His blood was shed Satan may have dared, in the boldness of his impiety, to have hoped;

but by that blood-shedding, Satan's dominion was overthrown, and man's salvation effected.

Yes, verily God "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all;" by Him we have received the atonement; by Him "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.[1]

And so, my brethren, we see why the sufferings of our Lord were involved in the very fact of our redemption, and that the expiating nature of those sufferings found their origin not in the implacability but in the love of Jehovah.

We also see why the sacred writers are as careful to assert the sinlessness of the human nature of our Lord, as they are to bring forward the fact of His being perfect God.

According to the scriptural view of the plan

[1] Phil. ii. 6-8.

of salvation, it was necessary that the High Priest of our profession should be holy, harmless, and undefiled; that of Him, the victim who suffered for us, it should be asserted and proved that He did no sin, and that guile was not found in His mouth.

II. This is the subject that comes now before our minds, and the consideration of it need not detain us long.

If we refer to those who knew Him best, who accompanied Him wherever He went, who were privy to His most secret counsels, who followed Him into those transactions of private life where defects are most apt to appear, and where no character but His has ever been found free from them, they tell us—and they wrote under inspiration—that in Him "there was no sin;"[1] that He was "as a lamb without blemish and without spot."[2]

We are told that though He was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet He was without sin.[3] We are instructed that He

[1] 1 St. John iii. 9. [2] 1 St. Peter i. 19. [3] Heb. iv. 15.

offered Himself, that is, He, the eternal Son of God, offered His human nature. He "offered Himself without spot to God."[1] He was made sin for us who knew no sin.[2]

His history has been before the world for more than eighteen hundred years. For eighteen hundred years the world has frequently made the attempt to imagine a faultless character, but no faultless character has ever been exhibited to mankind except that of our Jesus.

For eighteen hundred years the malice of the ungodly has been sharpened against the Lord by the malicious inspiration of Satan, and yet by the prying eye of the most malignant nature no flaw has ever been discovered in the character of the Divine Saviour.

His charity, His piety, His purity, His fortitude, His self-possession, His self-denial, His self-government—all prove the perfection of His character, and confirm the judgment of His very enemies.

It was so ordered by the overruling providence of God that sentence should be pro-

[1] Heb. ix. 14. [2] 2 Cor. v. 21.

nounced upon our Lord by His enemies, and that they, acting unconsciously, should be the instruments for declaring to the world that the Lamb of God, when about to be sacrificed for the sins of the world, was without blemish and without spot.

Never, surely, did any character undergo a scrutiny so severe as His. And yet, what were His most bitter enemies, the Pharisees, compelled to do?

They sought for false witness against Him; by that very fact declaring that they could, after a search rendered diligent by the most rancorous enmity, find nothing to lay to His charge.

Yea, they could not even ground a condemnation on the frivolous accusation of the false witnesses, but condemned Him at last for that fact which is the very foundation of our hopes —they condemned Him because He declared Himself to be the Son of God, thereby, as they correctly and logically reasoned, making Himself equal with God. The Lord Jesus was condemned for asserting His Divinity.

And by this sentence the authorities of Israel declared to the world that after the strictest investigation the Lamb of God is without spot, and that He who suffered for us had done no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.

The same testimony which was thus afforded by the Pharisees who compassed His death, is borne by Judas Iscariot, who, in the bitterness of his remorse exclaimed, "I have betrayed the innocent blood."

If we go to Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, we find him repeatedly bearing the same testimony, and vouching also for Herod. "I have found," he said, "no fault in Him; no, nor yet Herod."

The penitent malefactor only gave utterance to the feeling of every unprejudiced person when he said, "This man hath done nothing amiss." And the sentence of the whole world was uttered by the centurion, when, the Lord Jesus having given up the ghost, he exclaimed, "Certainly, this was a righteous man."

But if we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; and this is the wit-

ness of God, borne to the incarnate Jehovah in the waters of His baptism and on the Mount of Transfiguration — "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This is He, my brethren, who suffered for us, who did no sin, in whose mouth guile was not found. This is He who is held forth to us as an example, that we should follow His steps.

III. This is the subject which is thirdly and lastly to employ our thoughts.

And it is important for us to bear clearly in mind what the precise point marked out for our imitation really is.

It is not obedience simply, but obedience attended with suffering.

True it is that, as we have before said, all obedience must be attended with more or less of suffering, but this is precisely what people are least willing to understand, and a misunderstanding on this point leads to much self-deception. It induces people to say to their souls, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace.

Men very often go on doing what they

ought to do, and so regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as obedient Christians, when they are entirely strangers to the spirit of obedience, as exhibited by our Divine Exemplar; that is to say, their well-doing is brought to a check at the very point when the spirit of obedience is tested, and when they are called upon, we will not go so far as to say to endure suffering, but even to submit to inconvenience.

My brethren, depend upon it that our virtues are never to be trusted until they are tried, and that they are never tried without suffering.

Take the case of fortitude. A man may think himself patient, enduring, and brave; but he cannot know that it is so until he has some difficulty to overcome, some danger to encounter, some pain to endure.

Take the case of temperance. A man may imagine that he has a control over all his propensities, and that he is moderate in all his desires, but this can only be proved by his being placed under circumstances where to

resist a desire or to control a passion becomes actually painful.

Take the case of prudence. A man may be very careful, and wary, and cautious, and considerate, and circumspect, and discreet, and judicious, and yet he may be involved in ruin, because the mental pain to which he was exposed when called upon to resist a speculation, or avoid a course of conduct which promised great advantages, was greater than he could endure.

Take the case of justice. A man may be just and upright in all his doings, but he must wait till ruin, disgrace, and misery threaten him, until he is at his wits' end to know what to do, and until, under such circumstances, he is tempted to wrong his neighbour or to evade the law, before he can be assured himself, or prove to others that he is really just.

O my brethren, how true it is that no one can know the evil which still lingers in his own deceiving and deceivable heart, even after its conversion to God and by God. Who is there, being thus ignorant, but must feel it to

be an impossibility that he should be saved by his works? Who but is ready to exclaim, A Saviour, or I perish, a Redeemer, or I die!

But piety itself! How sublime are the sentiments uttered by the pious man, how elevated his opinions, how well he can discourse on the ways of Divine Providence, how does his heart glow within him as he speaks and thinks of God's love in Christ; but let that man look forward to the trial of his piety; let him wait till the desire of his eyes is taken from him, till some dear one who has almost become an idol has been removed; till ruin and disgrace are staring him in the face; till ridicule, and mockery, and calumny, and evil speaking, and lying, and slandering are doing their worst to drive him, or to laugh him out of the straight and narrow path; until his mind is depressed, and even spiritual comforts for a season withheld; until, though a child of light, he is walking in darkness. The truly pious will at these sad seasons say, "It is the Lord: let Him do as seemeth Him good." When pain of body, and anguish of heart, and disappointment of

soul are tempting him to murmur and complain, he will have grace to say, "Father, not my will, but Thine be done." He will not only bear afflictions patiently—the very heathen can do that,—but he, the Christian, will bear them thankfully. He will give God thanks for His Fatherly visitation. He will thank Him for removing from his heart that which rends his heart asunder, because he knows that God does not willingly afflict the children of men; that He only sends affliction to effect for us, or in us, some ulterior blessing, and that it is good for us to be afflicted—affliction working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Ay, my brethren, men talk of a faith in Divine Providence, but their faith may be only talk until they are heard praising the Lord, like Paul and Silas, in prison and in chains, amid the wreck of their hopes, the chill of disappointment, the desolation of the heart, the frustration even of their most cherished schemes for the promotion of the glory of God and the welfare of their fellow-creatures. A man may

be full of zeal and activity, and the name of God and His Church be ever in his mouth, but he may be serving self and not God. He may be yielding to the impulses of human passion, and encouraging the pride or the vanity of his heart, and he cannot know the contrary until he is laid powerless on the bed of languishing, his body paralysed, while his mind is energetic still; then his submissive piety will express itself in the words of our own great poet, when, adverting to his blindness, which stole upon him at the very time that his soul was, through special grace, more bent than ever to serve his Master:—

"Doth God exact day labour, light denied?
I fondly ask: But Patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, God doth not need
Either man's works or His own gifts; who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state
Is kingly; thousands, at His bidding, speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."

But, alas! so little is man inclined to obey, until his heart is entirely subdued by grace, that, as I have said, not suffering, in the

extreme sense of the word, but even a slight inconvenience will too often suffice to remove him from the path of duty.

How often do we see a man regular in his attendance at church, and admitting the paramount importance of attention to his religious duties, and yet, still occasionally absenting himself; and why? Simply because it is occasionally inconvenient to attend: there is some unexpected call of business; or a friend has unexpectedly arrived; or there has been a busy week, and a little more slumber is required; or there has been a little ailment of body; or the weather is now too cold, or now too hot,—excuses which never detain him from the place of business or the house of feasting, but which are quite sufficient to keep him from the house of God.

Or take the case of alms-giving. How many are willing to give until, in order to give, they must forego some indulgence to self.

We may add, by way of caution, that those are guilty also of disobedience who displace

themselves from the social position to which not chance, but God has called them.

Self-imposed sufferings, as in the case of ascetics, are acts of disobedience—for obedience consists in yielding to the will of God; and the will of God is indicated by the circumstances, whether of prosperity or of adversity, under which His providence places us.

He may try *us*, as he tried Job, by prosperity as well as by adversity; we are, like St. Paul, to be prepared for either fortune, to abound or to suffer loss. We have no more right to shrink from the greater trials of prosperity, than from the lesser trials of adversity.

It is not of suffering,—as if suffering were a virtue,—that we are speaking; we are speaking of obedience and of suffering, from time to time Divinely sent, to put our obedience to the test.

If we are not conscious, my brethren, of a desire in all things to obey, and to bend our will to the will of God, this is a proof that the heart is unconverted, and the soul unrenewed by grace; and what is to be done?

He who is to us an example of obedience, by His own obedience unto death, not only removed the obstacle to our admission into heaven after the period of our probation upon earth, but He removed from us also the impediment which existed, in the sinfulness of our nature, to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

He died, in other words, not for our justification only, but for our sanctification also.

This being the case, when we are under conviction of sin, and do really believe that we are lost and perishing sinners, we are exhorted by the preacher of the gospel to seek the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, through the mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, to those who persevere in prayer, the Holy Spirit will come in the fulness of His power; and, by the Spirit of Christ, that faith will be imparted to the believer's soul, which will afford to him an assurance that his sins have been blotted out. From that assurance, love to God will be shed abroad upon the heart, and love to God will manifest itself in a spirit of obedience—that true spirit of obedience which

is ready to sacrifice time, and money, and thought, for the Lord Jesus and His cause; which will endure any amount of suffering, rather than transgress the least of the commandments; which will bear shame, reproach, and scorn, for the sake of Him who was rejected and despised for us; which will sacrifice life itself, like the martyrs of old, if it please God to place the believer, as in times past, under the trials of a physical persecution.

Thus, my brethren, may we, in humility, follow the example of Him who, "though He were a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; and being made perfect through suffering, became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him."

CHRIST WITH US.

"Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."—MATT. xviii. 20.

IT is an article of the Christian faith that our blessed Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, has ascended into heaven, and that He sitteth at the right hand of God.

A certain fixed locality amidst the regions of boundless space is assigned to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, where He will abide, in peace and glory, till His enemies shall have been made His footstool, our elder brother, the representative of glorified human nature.

And yet our Lord saith, in the eighteenth chapter of St. Matthew, "where two or three are gathered together in His name, there am I in the midst of them." And again He saith, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."

But observe the nature of the promise, and

by whom it is made. It is not to the Divine omnipresence that the promise relates; for the Divine omnipresence is implied in the very existence of the Deity; and we require, in consequence, no special assertion on the part of our Lord, with reference to His continual presence with His people, in that He is God.

But the eternal Son of the Father, the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity, the Word which in the beginning, ere a creature existed, was with God, and was God, for us men, and for us and for our salvation, without ceasing to be God, became man also; He assumed the human nature: the Word was made flesh, and so became the God-man.

As such, as the God-Man, He, the Lord Jesus Christ, lived and laboured, was tempted like as we are, though without sin, and in all our afflictions was Himself afflicted. As such, as the God-Man, He died for our sins, and rose again for our justification: as such, He ascended up on high; as such He sitteth at the right hand of power; and as such, lo! He is with us, even unto the end of the world;

and wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, having first agreed as to what they shall ask, there, even there, our own dear Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ, is in the midst of us.

True, we do not see Him; but what then? I see not the soul of a single person among the many individuals of whom the congregation assembled in this Church is composed. My soul you do not see; your souls are invisible to me, but that your souls are here, we are absolutely certain. The fact is certified by your acts, when to act you are invited or impelled; but it would be equally true, even if you continued motionless, until the time of action shall have arrived. In the recognition of the fact of the Divine presence, as effected by that Person in the Godhead, who, as indicating to man the Divine will, is called the Word, we find our comfort and support; and may the blessing of God rest upon us while we enter into a further consideration of the subject.

And, first, we must bear in mind that the

human nature of our blessed Lord and Master must be subject to those laws of nature which He, as God, hath ordained and decreed.

The human nature, being a created nature, cannot be omnipresent; nor is this asserted. But the omnipresence of His human nature is not implied in the promise of our text, although its presence in various places *is*.

It is a presence promised to His church and people, wherever they may be; but this is to be distinguished from that universal presence of the Absolute, which, when we have regarded it as pervading not only all space, but which is distinguishable from space, as time is distinguishable from eternity, becomes a mystery incomprehensible by the intellect of the creature.

There is, however, a sense in which that which is created may be in more than one place at one and the same time.

Take the case of a man breathing upon a thing or person. By his breath he comes into contact with the thing or person that he breathes upon, while he himself remains

stationary: His presence is in one sense felt; in another it is denied by the person breathed upon.

But this is not sufficient to illustrate our present position. Let us rather look upon the sun, the creature, which our Divine Master, as God, commanded into existence and placed in the firmament.

There, in the firmament, the great luminary of day remains for ever stationary; it never moves from its place, and yet, without moving from its place, here it is upon earth the instrument of heat, and light, and life to this sublunary world. It is present by its rays; and by its rays it can be present at one and the same time in various parts of the earth; nay, in some parts more than in others, so that we can say, Now I am in the sun, and now I am out of it.

It is indeed when we think of this that we see one reason why the ascension of our Lord becomes an article of our faith, influential, when properly understood, upon our practice.

Had our Lord remained upon earth, His

presence could have been vouchsafed to only a few.

When He commissioned His apostles, He breathed upon them; but the breathing of grace is requisite on every soul that it may live, and for that reason our Lord was elevated and placed on His throne of glory; He ascended to that place in the kingdom of glory, a place more glorious than any occupied by the most glorious of angels or of archangels, that from thence, the Daystar on high, He might pour down the rays of grace, and, through them, be present wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, yea, be present with each believer, with each individual man throughout the universal Church, who by faith shall place himself within the sacred sunshine.

But the beams that flow down from the Sun of Righteousness are not created beams; they are the sanctifying influences of God the Holy Ghost. Only let us bear in mind that when, by the mighty operations of God the Holy Ghost, a new light dawns upon the under-

standing, and a new warmth glows in the heart, and a new power is given to the will, and a new tenderness softens the conscience, and a new creature rises from the putrefying mass of human corruption, susceptible of holy impressions, and capable of spiritual affections; it is through the mediation of the ever-present Saviour, the God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ, that the Spirit of God, sent by the Father, passeth into the hearts of His people, to be their guide and support, their sanctifier, their comforter, the Paraclete.

Yes, my brethren, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only mediator between God and man, must be present to our thoughts whenever we are conscious of the strengthening or comforting influences of the Holy Ghost; the same Lord Jesus of whom we read that, after His resurrection He appeared unto His apostles, and, having delivered to them their commission to act in His name, breathed on them, and saith unto them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."[1]

But if our Lord is thus present with His people, His body must now be endowed with

[1] St. John xx. 22.

properties over and above those of which He was possessed in the body of His humiliation.

And to instruct us how possible it is for a body to remain identically the same, and yet be subjected to a superinduction of glory, was precisely the object of the inspired evangelists, when they minutely recorded the circumstance of our Lord's transfiguration in the presence of Moses and Elias, representing the Church triumphant, and of three apostles, representing the Church militant here on earth. "After six days,"—six after an allusion to His death and resurrection,—"Jesus taketh Peter, and James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." St. Luke saith, "The fashion of His countenance was altered."

Yes, there was a superinduction of glory—there were beams of light flowing from that altered countenance, which did shine as the sun—but still He, whose appearance now, from its exceeding brightness, filled the apostles

with fear, was the same Lord Jesus whom they had just before seen a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, who had conversed with them of His approaching sufferings and death, the very subject upon which Moses and Elias, who were now present with Him, spake; the same Lord Jesus Christ whose still small voice inspired them with strength and confidence, as He came to them and touched them and said, "Arise, and be not afraid."

And then, my brethren, remark this: as they came down from the mountain Jesus charged them saying, Tell the vision to no man until—until when? "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead."

It was for the very purpose of illustrating the facts connected with our Lord's resurrection that the occurrence took place on the Mount of Transfiguration.

Let us pass on, then, to the subject of our Lord's resurrection.

It is as important to the comfort of those who believe and who love the Lord Jesus

Christ to be assured that He, blessed be His holy name, is with us *now* and with us *here*, as it is to our future hopes to know that He has risen from the dead, the firstfruits of them that sleep.

And both these facts are established by what occurred during the great forty days which elapsed between the resurrection and ascension of our Lord.

It is necessary that we should have complete evidence that the atonement effected for our race has been accepted in our behalf by the sovereign Ruler of all things. This evidence could only be supplied by our Lord's resurrection. And it has pleased God, therefore, that of this fact we should possess proof such as no other miracle could command. The event was foreshown in types, and foretold by prophets; it was attested by witnesses sufficient in number and unexceptionable in character; too well acquainted with our Lord's person to be deceived; too honest to deceive, and without object in deception; witnesses who had seen Him with their eyes, and heard Him with their ears, and

handled Him with their hands; who, undismayed by threats and not appalled by danger, bore witness to what they knew to be the fact before the Sanhedrim of the Jew and the tribunal of the heathen, who, with an uncalculating self-devotion, with an ardour which no discouragements could quench, and a resolution which no difficulties could overpower, spread the glad tidings through all quarters of the habitable globe, and whose operations were corroborated by the testimony of the Holy Ghost Himself in the miracles He empowered them to work, and the spiritual gifts He enabled them to impart.

But our Lord was careful, at the same time, to show that His spiritual and glorified body, although it was the same body as that in which He had been crucified, was now endowed with properties which it did not formerly possess, with incomprehensible attributes. And "there is," saith St. Paul, "a natural body, and there is a spiritual body."[1] The spiritual body is invisible to the eye of flesh.

Whenever, therefore, in order to prove the

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 44.

truth of His resurrection, our blessed Lord made His spiritual body visible, He worked a miracle.

He had once wrought a miracle when dwelling on earth, by which He rendered Himself invisible to His enemies; but what was then miraculous had now become natural, and what was formerly natural was now a miracle.

It would seem to be for the very purpose of showing us how the Lord Jesus can be with us without our knowing it, that the record has been preserved to us of what occurred to two of the disciples who were journeying from Jerusalem to Emmaus on the first great Easter day.

As they walked and were in eager discussion, "while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus Himself," we are told, "drew nigh, and went with them.

"But their eyes were holden that they should not know Him."

The awful occurrences which had lately taken place at Jerusalem were the subject of their conversation and discussion.

Our Lord rebuked them for not comparing the events of the day with the predictions of Scripture in relation to the Messiah, "and beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.

"And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight"—the miracle, His visibility ceased, and the spiritual body was in its natural state. "And they said one to another, Did not our hearts burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures."[1]

Now it is evident at once that it was not our Lord's intention by His appearance, to prove the reality of His resurrection. Of His

[1] St. Luke xxiv. 13 *seq.*

resurrection it does not, in truth, afford any proof additional to that which we elsewhere have.

The design must have been to assure us that the Lord Jesus Christ, though now invisible, can still be with us—when we are communing with ourselves, when we are walking by the wayside, in our homes, and at our hearths, when we are travelling from place to place, and when resuming our seat amidst the comforts of domestic life—that wherever two or three are gathered together in His name, there He is in the midst of them.

Man may be compared, while in this world, to a bird in the shell. Within the shell the unhatched bird is fully formed; its parts, though undeveloped, are all prepared for its future state of existence.

When the egg is fractured, then the bird (how changed, but still the same!) bursts at once into that unknown world of beauty, by which, though concealed, it has been all along surrounded. It rises into newness of life, its capacities beginning immediately to unfold themselves.

But this is not all: how slight the partition between the unhatched bird and that other world to which it is predestined, and for which it was formed within the shell! How near the mother bird, who, unseen, has imparted to it vitality and warmth!

And, my brethren, when the thin partition which separates us from the world of glory around us shall have been dissolved by the hand of death, when we shall then have eyes to see, and ears to hear, and minds to understand the invisible realities by which we are now—now when, as it were, in the shell,—surrounded, we shall then perceive how very near to us the Lord of Life hath ever been; we shall understand how that it hath been under the shadow of His wings that our hearts have been vivified by grace and made to burn within us.

Now, my brethren, these things I recall to your recollection, and bring under your notice, because genuine Christianity is not only heaven in reversion; it is also happiness in hand. The heart which is under grace is a heart not only in a state of preparation for the

eternal mansions, and the heaven opened to us by our Redeemer's blood; it is a heart, also, which, by seeking communion with the Lord Jesus Christ, may realise to itself, even here below, an earnest, a foretaste, an antepast of good things to come—the vital warmth imparted by Him under whose wings we are growing into life eternal.

Delightful it is to think of this—the nearness of our dear Friend in our lonely walks and solitary moments, in our sleepless nights and our hours of sadness and affliction.

But it is not with the sentiment of religion only, not with the feelings merely, that the great truth we have been considering is concerned; it is applicable to the stern realities of life.

We perceive that you are a praying man: one who unites prayer to exertion, and who, while labouring for what you desire to possess, implore a blessing upon your labours, and the interposition of a special Providence.

And lo! you are in deep distress; ruin is impending; you begin to fear that all your

struggles after independence will be in vain, and that your children will have to beg their bread.

But by chance, a friend appears—a kind friend, a good Samaritan—he lends you a helping hand, he proffers the assistance you require; you once more become prosperous and repay your benefactor, so far as repayment can be made by a heart whose gratitude is an eternal debt, a debt which it is joy to owe. "Owe no man anything, except to love one another"—love is an endless debt.

Or, take another case; you are examining honestly, sincerely, earnestly some great truth, from the love of truth, and you find it difficult to understand or to accept it.

But by chance the very book suited to your particular turn of mind falls in your way; or by chance the subject is selected by the preacher, and ably handled in the pulpit; or by chance some friend drops in, and words of wisdom flow from the lips of one who, guided by the Church and her formularies, is mighty in the Scriptures, and you are persuaded and convinced.

Or again, you happen to be in doubt as to some course of conduct to be pursued; and by chance you meet the very person, a man of wisdom and experience, qualified to act as your adviser and your guide.

Or, once more, you are very sad at heart, inclined to despond and despair, and lo! by chance, you open upon the very text in the Bible which speaks consolation to your afflicted soul, and brings assurance to your heart.

By chance! and, my brethren, what is chance?

Chance is merely a word expressive of men's ignorance. It is intended to denote something which has occurred we know not how, or why, or through what interposition or interference.

Still a cause there must be: though that cause is not discoverable by the unaided intellect of the natural man.

But, my brethren, the Christian opens the eye of faith, his heart is burning within him as the blessing comes, and he sees in the Lord Jesus Christ its cause and donor.

The hand of charity is the hand of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The voice which utters the word is the voice of man, but through that voice it is the Lord Jesus Christ who speaks to the *soul.*

It is the Lord Jesus Christ who brings to you the relief, the comfort, and the counsel. He sent the friend. He inspired the preacher. He opened the book. He used in your favour the voice of eloquence and the mind of genius. The friend, the preacher, the writer, they know not what they did, but they were instruments, things, under His direction, who employed them as His mouthpiece, or as the pen in His hand.

Ay, my brethren, if, by the grace of God, we realise to our hearts the great truths this day brought under our notice,—in all the doubts and distresses of our earthly pilgrimage, in all the dangers and conflicts of our Christian warfare, in all the toils and trials of this mortal state,—we shall see the Lord Jesus ever at hand, a very present help, to strengthen us, to watch over us, to protect us, to support us, to fortify us, amidst winds of discord and the moral storms; and we shall open the ear

of faith, and hear Him say, "It is I, be not afraid."

But, my brethren, although the Lord Jesus went about all Jewry doing good; although, in the lowly plain, He was with the distracted parent, and heard him in his prayer, "I believe, help Thou my unbelief;" although He was with that parent's afflicted child lying agonized on the hard earth, and healed him; although He was with the disciples when walking by the wayside, or trembling on the stormy sea; although He fed five thousand on the banks of a lake, and fed His disciples with the bread of life, constituting His second Sacrament in an upper room,—it was exalted on Tabor that He was seen in the fulness of His glory—it was there, in that selected spot, that His face did shine as the sun, and that He brought His apostles, His holy ones, in the church militant, into communion with those holy ones in the church triumphant, whom He permits to share His glory.

And let us, my brethren, remember that although there is no place in which the eye

of faith may not see its Saviour, yet it is in Zion that He appears in perfect beauty; and His presence is more emphatically promised when two or three are gathered together in His name, having agreed beforehand as to what they shall ask; that while He hears us, there, where no other eye is upon us,—in our secret closets,—yet it is in the ministrations of His ordinances that He saith especially to His ministers, "Lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the world."

Let us remember that, while the great luminary of the day is present wherever solar light may be, yet it is into the sunshine that we go for special warmth and light; and instead, therefore, of "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is," let us rejoice to be present there, where the beams of heavenly grace descend upon those who, with angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven, offer their homage, as loyal subjects, to the King of kings; *there*, where, because the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ know that it is only through His merits and

intercession that the fallen creature can share in the hallelujahs of the holy ones, or draw near with boldness to the throne of grace, they rejoice with exceeding great joy, and with a holy confidence, in our Lord's own most gracious words, "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

CROSS OF CHRIST.

"God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."—GALATIANS vi. 14.

AFTER the thoughts suggested to our minds by the Church in the last week of Lent and during the Easter festival, I know not any words which more clearly express than these, the grateful feelings of a satisfied heart.

With reference to the general scope of our text, we need not say much, since a mode of expression is used with which, in temporal affairs, we are familiar.

We are accustomed in this country to speak of the Crown, the rights of the Crown, the property of the Crown, not meaning by the expression the mere circlet which on State occasions may adorn the sovereign's brow, but meaning to refer to the prerogatives, the property of him or of her who may bear the Crown.

In like manner the Scriptures speak of the

house of David, meaning not his habitation, but his family,—the house being the place where the family has its abode.

The cross is thus a word used by the apostle metonymically, to signify that fundamental fact of Christianity which, upon the cross, was finished and fulfilled.

The Divine government extends not only over the sons of men, but over all created intelligences. There are in existence numerous species of intellectual beings besides man. They are called in Scripture the hosts of God; and we are told that their happiness consists in being permitted to contemplate the wondrous works and the incessant working of their Creator.

Over these God constitutes Himself the King or Governor, ruling them by an appeal to their reason,—an attribute which implies freedom both of will and of action within certain prescribed limits, or the power of being able to say, when God commands, I will, or I will not obey.

To all creation there is one law,—that which

connects life and happiness with obedience to the will of the Creator; and this law would cease to exist if the converse did not also hold good, which renders misery and death the necessary and inevitable consequence of disobedience.

When the human race, therefore, fell, justice to all the other rational beings in existence who are contemplating the actions of the Sovereign Ruler of all things, required man's misery and death.

Without the condemnation of man the law, which connects life and happiness with obedience to God, would cease to exist. There would be no law. In the absence of all law the will of the creature would prevail over the will of the Creator, and the universe would become a universal hell.

But if something were done, equivalent to the condemnation of man, to uphold the majesty of the law, then—that fact established—the human race might be pardoned without injury being done to the other created intelligences who form the subjects of the Divine government.

The law could not be vindicated—even by the annihilation of the whole universe—more completely, or so completely, as it would be by God's own obedience to it.

This, then, was determined in the counsels of God most high. God, without interfering with the constituted order of things, in order to pardon man, would Himself first magnify the law by being obedient to it.

But God, as God, could not obey or disobey. Therefore God, in the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity, assumed the human nature,—the body and the soul of man,—that thus, the God-man, He might obey.

This is the philosophy of the atonement. An equivalent for man's condemnation was required; and this equivalent was offered when, to magnify the law by His own obedience to it, the second Person in the Godhead became, in the Lord Jesus Christ, incarnate.

And in all things the God-man, our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, did obey. He obeyed when He remained in obscurity for thirty long years of inaction; He obeyed when

He permitted Himself to be tempted by Satan; He obeyed when wicked men, under diabolical influence, rejected, despised, and persecuted Him; He obeyed when He overcame the very tenderness of His nature, as well as its other demands, rather than perform a miracle, except under the conditions prescribed; He obeyed When He acted, He obeyed when He suffered; He obeyed when He submitted to authority, and He obeyed when He *asserted* it; He obeyed when He spake, and obeyed when He answered never a word to His accusers; when feeding His sheep with the bread of life, or when refusing to cast His pearls before swine. When Satan influenced evil men to conspire against Him and insult Him, when Satan brought disgrace upon Him, when Satan maddened the people, and alarmed the rulers; when, through vile men, Satan blasphemed and buffeted Him and spat upon Him, then angels, as well as devils and men, beheld the Lord Jesus Christ perfect in His silence, the perfection of His obedience rendering necessary His submission to trials the most severe; when, more bitter

than all His former trials, His friends forsook Him and His own betrayed Him; when, bitterest of all—that the trial might be complete—the comforting influences of the Holy Ghost were, for a season, withdrawn, and in His spiritual destitution, God, in the third Person of the blessed Trinity, forsook Him, still was His obedience perfect. He was obedient even unto death, and the trial was to remain stern to the last, and the tempter, through his accursed agents, not content with His death, condemned Him to a *malefactor's* death; He died at the place of public execution; He died crucified between malefactors; He died amidst the ridicule, the mockery, the blasphemy of enemies, triumphing and rejoicing in the apparent success of their iniquity. He died, He obeyed even unto death, and by His obedience even unto death, His obedience was proved to be perfect; at His death it was finished—*His* obedience, *our* salvation. On His cross *that* was done which rendered our pardon compatible with the interests of the Divine government; by His cross infinite mercy was proclaimed to be consistent

with infinite justice; it was proved that God could still be just, though He pardoned penitent sinners. On His cross the atonement was made; yes, each individual man when he accepts by faith the salvation effected for the whole race by the Lord Jesus Christ, is at one with God.

Well, indeed, then, may the cross be used to represent and to express the whole system of salvation, the Divine plan of redemption, the entire mystery of redeeming love.

Well, indeed, may all who name the name of Christ assume as their motto, the words of the apostle, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ."

But here the question arises, What is the meaning of the expression, to glory? To glory means to exult, and so to exult sometimes as even to boast.

And then, what do we find? We find in the Epistle to the Romans, and again in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, that St. Paul did glory in other things besides the cross

of Christ; he gloried in his tribulations and infirmities.[1]

Others looked upon him, when he was bowed down by infirmities and tribulation, with feelings of commiseration and pity; some even with contempt. But, said the noble-hearted apostle, "What you pity and contemn, is my my glory. I glory in, I exult in, I make my boast of, my tribulations."

Would not any one of *you*, he seems to say, serving under a great commander in a just and righteous war for right against might, glory in the fact of His placing you, when the day of battle came, in the van of the army, the post of danger being the post of honour? Would you not, if wounded in the fight, point in after days to those very wounds and glory in the scars? Even so, I glory in being permitted to endure hardship and to suffer in the cause of my Divine Master, the great Captain of our salvation.

It is in the same spirit that the great apostle, visiting his converts at Rome, saith, "I have

[1] Romans v. 3; 2 Cor. xi. 30.

whereof to glory in those things which pertain to God."[1]

He gloried, as well he might, in being of the seed of Abraham and of the tribe of Benjamin; he gloried in being a native of that great country—great not in the extent of its dominion, but in the vastness of its privileges—which worshipped Jehovah, and Jehovah only, at a time when all the world beside was falling down before wood, the work of men's hands, or saying to the sun, the moon, and the stars, "Ye are our gods." Yes, my brethren, there was no harm in glorying, *so far*, for St. Paul himself exulted.

But when the Judaising Christians so exalted their Mosaic privileges as to supersede the cross of Christ; when they represented justification as dependent not simply upon faith in the crucified Lamb of God, but upon the rights and privileges pertaining to their country and Church, upon an observance of the Mosaic ordinances; when, in a word, instead of seeing how Judaism was to be developed into Christianity, they endeavoured to absorb Christianity into

[1] Romans xv. 17.

Judaism, then he did, in his holy indignation, treat his boasted, his cherished privileges, as, in this connection, worse than nothing; he contemned them, and with indignant enthusiasm he exclaimed, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ," and, he added, "by whom the world is crucified to me."

And here comes the question, What is meant by the world? What, in this connection, do we mean when we speak of the world? and how was it crucified to St. Paul?

Now, generally speaking, we mean by the world the things which are external to ourselves, and when we do this, then there is a sense in which the world and the things pertaining to it are not to be shunned, but, on the contrary, ought to be objects of our love, and are worthy of our pursuit.

"God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, to the end that all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

What was loved by God may of course be loved by the creatures of God.

The beautiful, the good, the true, wherever, and in whatever proportions they may be found, are objects of admiration, respect, and love.

The whole tendency of Scripture—especially of that portion which is in daily use, the Book of Psalms—is to cultivate that tendency of our nature, to love the beautiful for its own sake, whether in nature or in art. To love not only the holy ones of God, but man as man, is one of the first duties upon which the Scriptures of the New Testament largely insist. The pursuit of the true by the investigations of science is encouraged by the example of Solomon, to whose example in this respect frequent reference is made, in order that we may learn that physical and metaphysical inquiries are to employ, and by employing, to invigorate the mind of man, which is to find, in an ever-increasing knowledge, a portion of its happiness and an increase of its holiness in the kingdom of glory and its eternal state.

Neither does our Lord call us from worldly pursuits. He does not require of us all to for-

sake all, in order that we may follow Him. He does this occasionally, when, for instance, by His providence, He so orders events that we are involved in worldly loss or ruin, depressed with sorrow, weakened by disease, or overwhelmed by poverty.

But these are exceptional cases. When our Lord was in the flesh He *did* indeed call upon some persons, in order that they might follow Him, to forsake all; but this was not the general rule even then, and the number of persons so called was small.

Among the many objects of his compassion, who, healed by His word or His touch, were told that they had been saved by their faith—among these many believers—we read of scarcely any who were called from their worldly occupations and pursuits to forsake all, that they might be our Lord's disciples; nay, on one occasion we read of a grateful believer, whose heart's desire was that he might leave all to follow our Lord, but who was not permitted so to do, the Lord sending him to his

home that he might evince his gratitude and serve his Lord by the humble discharge of his home duties.

The duty of making our homes as happy as circumstances will admit is strongly enforced in Scripture; yea, that man is represented as worse than an infidel who neglects them of his own household.

And yet what saith our Lord? Mark the words: "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."[1]

Now this cannot, of course, interfere with that general rule of parental, filial, and brotherly love, which we have seen to be universally enforced in Scripture; no, it is only intended to warn us that to this rule, as to every other rule, there may be exceptions, there must be exceptions; that circumstances may arise in which these affections must yield to the highest affection of the sanctified heart—love to God.

[1] St. Luke xiv. 26.

When in former times the martyr was chained to the stake, and he was exposed to a cruel death, there were unbelievers in his own household—brothers, sisters, perhaps a wife, clasping her children in her arms, and saying, "For *our* sakes renounce the faith, and sacrifice to the gods of the heathen;" and then there was, my brethren, a stern gentleness in the refusal of one, who might hope that his example would preach with success where his precept had already failed, as he said, "The Lord Jesus gave His life for me, and my life is His, when His cause demands it, and He calls me to the crown of martyrdom—to follow Him by forsaking all—forsaking you, O ye who are dearer to my heart than life itself!"

Here, then, we see what our Lord means. We must, for His sake, be prepared to give up the most cherished of our treasures—that which the heart holds dearest—when what of the world we love the most, happens to stand opposed to our duty towards God—obedience. The followers of an obedient Lord—they must learn to obey.

The world, then, which, as Christians, we renounce, is that, whatever it may be, which stands opposed to the known will or commandment of God, to our sense of duty, or to our allegiance to Him who is the great Captain of our salvation, whose warfare with evil, within and without, we are to carry on, and whose cause we are to maintain. The *world*, as opposed to the world's *Creator*, *Redeemer*, *Sanctifier*.

Now, my brethren, who, who only can rise to this height of virtue? We answer, he, and he only, who thoroughly and from his heart believes in the world to come, whose affections are set upon the things above, who is laying up treasures *there* "where neither rust nor moth doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through and steal." That man regards as nothing whatever is placed in competition with his eternal interests. He has no notion of sacrificing everlasting bliss for the pleasures of sin, which are but for a moment. The world, in this aspect, is crucified to him. It is as though it were not.

But how were life and immortality brought

to light? How, but by the cross of Christ? How, but by Him who died for our sins and rose again for our justification?

Well, then, might the apostle exclaim with fervent zeal, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified to me."

But this will not be. The world will not be crucified to us unless we also be crucified to the world.

Ours is a fallen nature, and to a fallen nature what is evil in the world has its attractions. The allurements of evil are addressed to a nature prone to evil. To the call to sin from without, an affirmative response from the sinful heart is sure to come.

Hence it is that the Christian must have a new heart, a new principle, a new motive, that is to say, he must be animated by love to God.

But how is this new heart to be obtained? It is the gift of God, a creation within us by the Holy Spirit. But it is a gift that, when we ask for it, can only be obtained through the

intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; and His intercession is prevailing. Why? Even because of His meritorious cross and passion. Having died for our sins, having risen for our justification, He went up on high, and there He receives gifts for men—those gracious influences of the Holy Spirit which come as the result of His meritorious sufferings.

Well, then, again might the apostle exclaim, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

And now, my brethren, looking to ourselves, we are not to be blamed if we glory in the fact of our being Christians. We are not to be blamed if we glory in the fact of our being Britons, natives of that nation placed by providence of God in the van of European civilisation. We are not to be blamed if we glory in the fact of our belonging to the best reformed branch of Christ's holy Catholic Church. On the contrary, we should be worthy of censure if we were to place our-

selves with those mere pretenders to humility who are for ever decrying our national peculiarities, our insular institutions, and that Church which is the bulwark of the Reformation.

But if we think to be saved because we are Englishmen; if we think to be saved because we are called by the name of Christ, and say to Him, Lord, Lord; if we think to be saved because we have been admitted by baptism into a pure and reformed Church, we shall then be miserably mistaken, and the preachers of truth must reiterate to us the words of the apostle: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ."

We may exult when we contemplate the triumphs of faith, when we perceive how grace prevails over nature; we may glory in the regeneration and renovation of fallen man; but still we know that the taint of sin pollutes us to the last, that at the best we are but unprofitable servants, that sin cleaveth to our holiest things; and we thank God for our salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. On *His* righteousness, not on our own merits, we rely

for the hope of grace here and of glory hereafter. Let us glory, then, in the cross of Christ. It is the cross which cancels iniquity and draws the human heart from sin to holiness.

There and there only, though the Deist rave,
And Atheist, if earth bear so base a slave,
There and there only is the power to save.

There no delusive hope invites despair,
No mockery meets you, no deception there;
The spells and charms that blinded you before,
All vanish there and fascinate no more.

For every preacher let this test suffice,
The cross, once seen, is death to every vice.

COME UNTO ME.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."—MATTHEW xi. 28-30.

"COME unto Me," saith our Lord, "all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

What comfort, what confidence, what peace which passeth all understanding do these words imply!

And of this comfort, of this assurance, who does not stand in need? Who, in a spiritual sense, does not labour? Who is not heavy laden?

When we speak of those that labour, we speak of persons who are labouring under some spiritual infirmity; of persons who desire to do something, which, on attempting it, they find themselves powerless to accomplish.

When we speak of persons heavy laden, we

speak of those who are bowed down by sins, which, unless they are relieved from the burden of them, will bow them down to hell; of those of whom the apostle speaks when he says, "I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. . . . I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."[1]

Here, my brethren, we have a description of the natural man—ay, of the natural man in his best state, but considered apart from that special grace which he is invited to seek in

[1] Rom. vii. 14, *seq.*

Christ our Lord; here we have him described in his weakness and under his burdens.

Who, indeed, is there who does not stand in need of the comfort, the strengthening, and support, which can alone be found in the Lord Jesus Christ?

Our difficulties vary under the ever-varying circumstances of life; and, at different periods of our existence, our temptations assume different forms and divers shapes. They attack us from opposite quarters; sometimes they come as allurements, and sometimes as threats; sometimes in our strength, and sometimes in our weakness; now in over confidence, then in distrust; in our activity, and in our indolence; sometimes in murmurs, evincing a want of faith; at other times, in that perversion of faith which degenerates into incredulity; even in our very virtues there is ever temptation to a vicious extreme; such as transforms piety into fanaticism, zeal into intolerance, faith into faction, and religion itself into superstition.

Oh! the comfort of knowing, thou Christian man, thou believer in the Lord Jesus Christ,

that, under all conditions of life, the everlasting arms are expanded to receive us!

Oh! the comfort of hearing the voice for ever speaking to the faithful soul, "Come unto Me!"

Oh! the comfort of knowing that each inward difficulty which disturbs us, each secret weakness which depresses us, the plague which is consuming the heart,—all, all are known to Him who saith, "Come unto Me."

And now, brethren, what have we said?

If to the Lord Jesus are known the secrets of each man's heart, then,—observe, my brethren,—the Lord Jesus Christ must be omniscient.

There is, indeed there can be, but one omniscient Being, even the living God, "to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets can be hid."

Most true; God, and God only, is omniscient; but when, for us men, and for our salvation, the eternal Son of the Father, the second Person in the one and only Godhead, assumed our nature, and became in time per-

fect man, He did not cease to be what He was and is in eternity—perfect God.

His Divinity is implied in the utterance of our text; He, the God-man, it is; He who, though God, can be touched by a sense of our infirmities; He it is who, in His omniscient sympathy, saith unto us, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But, if this be so, it may be said, Then no one need despair; and this, my brethren, is precisely what we, the ambassadors of the living God, are authorised to declare and commissioned to proclaim.

This is the gospel—this our Lord's commission and command to His people, Go into all the world; go to the naked savages in far-distant lands; go to those who, in civilised lands, are savages in heart; go to the unhallowed saloons of dissipation; go to the darker haunts of vice, and say unto them who labour and are heavy laden, to the victim of dissipation or of despair, There is no sin for which the blood of Christ cannot atone, no heart which the Spirit

of Christ cannot renew; no sinner, therefore, whom the Lord Jesus cannot save. "Come unto Me," are His own most gracious words; come, ye halt and blind; come, ye who are dead in trespasses and sin; with all your burdens and weakness and weariness; with all your sins and guilt and worthlessness. Come, conscience-stricken David; come, thou weeping Magdalen; come, weak and wavering Peter; come, saith our Lord; come, and He added, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast off."

But observe, my brethren, observe how the invitation is guarded—how in the invitation, extensive as it is, all the interests of morality are protected! To all there is encouragement, but the encouragement is realised by those, and by those only, who come.

In the little word "Come" is folded up the whole morality of the sentence, the very ethics of the gospel.

"Come unto Me;" wherefore the question, the all-important question, is, How are we to come?

We hear the call, we kindle into fervour at

the Divine promise, but what are we to do? how are we to come?

If we were to say we must come by faith, this would be a true, but nevertheless an insufficient answer, for we must have faith *before* we come—faith to induce us to come.

When our blessed Lord was in the flesh the halt, the maimed, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, came to the blessed Jesus, and they came, why?

They came *because* of their faith; they came because they believed that the relief they required the Lord Jesus was able to give.

Their petition implied their faith.

But even if a man *did* believe, yet if (being diseased, we will say, in his limbs) he had refused to encounter the fatigue, or the pain, or the exertion necessary to raise him from the bed of languishing; if he had remained at home; if he had merely sent a message to our Lord, that man could have received no cure, upon him no miracle could have been wrought; to that poor man no rest, no refreshment, could have been imparted, for our Lord required, as

a general rule, that the afflicted person should come to Him; and the coming, the exertion made to approach our Lord, though based on faith and prompted by faith, was, nevertheless, something distinct from faith.

Without faith, the person seeking relief could not have come in a condition to receive the blessing; but besides faith the coming was required.

And so now.

Faith is the hand that toucheth the hem of our Saviour's garment; or faith is the tongue which responds to the invitation, and saith, Lord, I come; faith is that which appropriates the merits of our Lord, and secures, through His righteousness, our justification.

But this is not the coming. The coming is something additional to this.

Grace only begins where nature ends. Before we receive the supernatural, we must use what by nature we already have. "To him that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not shall be taken away what he seemeth to have." Our Lord requires of those to whom

His grace is offered, that they first, and at the same time, exercise their natural gifts, that, like the lowly Mary, they at least do what they can.

We come to the Lord whenever (aware that we can only be made righteous through the sanctifying influences of His Holy Spirit, and seeking for pardon and grace, for life and light) we, nevertheless, exert ourselves to break off habits of sin; and a further step we take when, saying, Lord, be merciful to me a sinner, we endeavour deliberately to form habits of good. Step by step we draw nearer and more near unto the Lord, as we advance from one degree of holiness to another.

This moral walk, this spiritual exertion, this struggle with difficulties, this attempt to move the limb though the limb be paralysed, this effort to obey, to improve, to advance,—it will not heal you, it will not restore you to spiritual life and vigour. The Lord Jesus Christ, He, and He only, is the Physician of the soul—the Saviour of sinners; He, and He only, is the Father of the fatherless, the God of the

widow, the Helper of the helpless, the Hope of the hopeless, the Haven of the tempest-tossed.

But our dependence upon an Almighty Saviour does not exclude—no, it implies, exertion on our part.

Exertion on our part is implied throughout the whole Christian scheme. We are justified by the alone merits of the Lord Jesus Christ—yes, but we must appropriate those merits by faith; and though faith itself be a grace, an inspiration of God the Holy Ghost, it is to be sought for by the praying man when he is reading, and marking, and learning, and inwardly digesting the holy Scriptures. For our daily bread we make our prayer day by day; but while we pray, we must also labour for any good gift of which we may desire to be possessed.

The gifts of God we accept as alms vouchsafed to undeservers; we do not regard them in any sense as wages in payment for work done; yet he who acknowledges himself to be an undeserver must move his limbs and stretch forth his hand—he must exert himself before

he can realise the dole, which he does not obtain because he comes, though his it would never be *unless* he come.

We are regenerated, renovated, sanctified, by the Spirit of Christ; but to receive that gift we must come by an endeavour to remove all those impediments to grace which His all-searching eye may detect in our moral nature, to eradicate whatever there may be in us of evil, and to cultivate whatever of good the Holy Ghost may have already imparted to the soul.

Hence our Lord does not say that there is no yoke, no burden, under the Christian dispensation—no, the promise amounts only to this, that if you will assume the yoke and the burden, He will make it easy and light.

But, here again, how astounding are the terms in which throughout this wonderful passage the injunction is delivered and the promise implied!

Our Lord's words are, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart."

Most astonishing, most incomprehensible, these words, when uttered in this connection, must be to those who know not Christ.

Suppose that any mere man; suppose that St. Peter, St. James, St. John, the greatest of men—suppose, I say, any mere man had pronounced an awful malediction upon Chorazin and Bethsaida, because Chorazin and Bethsaida had refused to believe in that mere man. Suppose that a mere man, and he a carpenter's son, had declared himself to be greater and wiser than Solomon—at that time acknowledged universally among the Orientals to be the wisest, the most wonderful, the most highly gifted among men; suppose that a mere man had assumed to himself those divine attributes which are implied, as we have seen, in the promise made in our text; suppose that a mere man, at such a time, and under these circumstances, had predicated of himself meekness and lowliness of heart—that man would have laid himself open to the charge of inconsistency, to which our blessed Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ cannot be exposed, on the

ground to which we have before referred, and on that ground only, namely, that when He became man for our salvation, He did not, as we have already reminded you, cease to be God also, but was and is the God-Man.

To us Christians the argument comes with a force which is irresistible.

God, as God only—considered as He essentially is—must be to the unholy what the Scriptures declare Him to be—a terrible Lord God, even a consuming fire.

To render the Lord God Almighty approachable by man, to confer upon man, by incorporating the human nature with the divine, the capability of approaching the eternal glory without incurring destruction, the everlasting Son of the Father did Himself become incarnate, and by that very act He becomes an example of meekness and lowliness beyond all comparison marvellous; of meekness and of lowliness, which we trace in every act of our Lord, as we meditate upon His course, from the manger of Bethlehem, through thirty long years of obscurity, amidst the insults and

injuries heaped on Him in His ministry, to that dread hour in Gethsemane, when His voice went up to heaven, saying, "Father, not My will, but Thine, be done;" at that time, when the meek and the lowly One bent His neck without a murmur to the yoke, and, sinking beneath the burden, sweat, as it were, great drops of blood.

How powerfully is the same fact employed for the same purpose, to hold forth our Lord as a model of meekness and lowliness, by the Apostle Paul!

He, saith St. Paul, speaking of our Lord, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God: yet He made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."[1]

Because He who was greater than Solomon, because He who, as the second Person in the Godhead, took upon Him our nature, and in

[1] Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.

that nature obeyed the Divine law, obeyed even unto death, He was an example of the most perfect humility, as well as of most unbounded love.

And now, my brethren, in conclusion, let us look to the whole passage.

"Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

These words, inviting us to come, imply the omnipotence of Him who gives the invitation and the promise. They assume that He is almighty to save; and if they had been uttered by a mere man—by any one, for example, of the great apostles to whom allusion has just been made—they would be, as regards man, a mockery; as regards God, they would approach almost to a blasphemy.

But there is no presumption, no undue assumption of power when these gracious, comfortable words are uttered by our Lord Jesus Christ.

For though He is the elder brother of the great family of man, and though we are able with the eye of faith and with the hand of

penitence to see and to probe the death wounds He endured when, for our sakes, He died; the tongue of faith at the same time expresses the deep conviction of the meek and lowly heart, and exclaims, "My Lord and my God!"

INTERNAL MANIFESTATION OF JESUS.

"He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. Judas saith unto Him (not Iscariot), Lord, how is it that Thou wilt manifest Thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

JOHN xiv. 21, 22, 23.

THERE are two manifestations of our blessed Lord and only Saviour Jesus Christ. The first preceded the second when our Lord was on earth, and the second is subsequent to the first even now. The first is the effect of His sovereignty, and is forced upon us whether we are willing or not. The second is, in some degree, dependent upon our own will and choice.

Our Lord was seen in the flesh. His power was evinced to all the Jews. By His wisdom, His mercy, His divine excellence, He won the

affections of His disciples. He was seen to suffer, He was heard to speak, the disciples beheld Him die, and they conversed with Him when He was risen from the dead.

This was His first manifestation—His manifestation to all men, and His manifestation to those who were His disciples.

But to the *hearts* of His disciples He was not manifested until He had gone hence; until, having made the atonement, He had, with a spiritual body, risen from the grave; with a body which, as such, required some distinct locality; but with a spiritual body, which, though locally present in one place only—the right hand of God, can be influentially present in various places at the same time; even as the sun, though locally present in heaven, can penetrate with its rays at one and the same time all the corners of the earth.

On this account it was expedient, yea, it was needful for the Lord Jesus Christ to go hence; it was necessary in order that there might be a spiritual manifestation of Him to the souls of men; and it was by endeavouring to make this

clear to the souls of His disciples before His departure that the Lord hath instructed the Church in all ages. This mysterious, comforting truth hath been taught us by none other than our Lord Himself; and if at the time the disciples were perplexed rather than consoled; when, after His resurrection, our Lord did enter spiritually into their souls, then this conversation must have recurred to their memories, bringing with it a consolation which, before experiencing it, they could not have conceived possible.

Then, in very truth, they were taught of God; then they understood the Scriptures and were wise unto salvation. Then were they able to overcome the love of the world, to withstand the temptations of the devil, to perform works of righteousness, and to sacrifice all that was dear to them, that they might preach the gospel to a perishing world; then were their hearts comforted with the peace of God, and their souls gladdened with the hope of glory; then were they enabled to feel that "the kingdom of God is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

The order of redemption, which is, of necessity, presented to beings, constituted as we are, under an order of succession, appears to be this—

When man fell, God, in the Trinity of His Persons, willed our redemption, so as to render possible the salvation of all, and certain the salvation of some, without detriment to the constituted order of things in the material and moral universe.

It was the Divine will, the will of the sacred Three whose will is one, that the Father should send the Son; that the Son, having assumed the body which was prepared for Him—a sinless human body,—should unite the human nature with the Divine, and so, by His obedience, even unto death, make the atonement; that He should, in the same united nature, the God-Man, go up on high, and then send, through His intercession with the Father, the third Person of the Holy Ghost, to regenerate and sanctify the souls of men, so that to their souls the whole Godhead might be manifested, and each sanctified soul be brought into union with the Divine nature.

So the apostles first saw the Lord Jesus Christ, then loved the Lord Jesus, then received the Holy Ghost; and to their souls thus sanctified, Christ was manifested spiritually; and, through Christ, the mediator, both the Father and the Holy Ghost — the Father adopting them and the Holy Ghost consoling them.

We, my brethren, still have the external manifestation of this great work in Holy Scripture, in the ordinances of the Church, and in all the various ways in which the truths of the gospel are brought to bear upon our intellectual and moral nature.

As I have already remarked, this is an act of the Divine sovereignty, one of those acts for which God will not render an account. We can only say that it is the will of the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. His will it is that you should have been born and still live in a land where the true light shineth, and where the gospel is preached in its purity.

You, born in England, cannot but know that a Saviour is offered to the world in the Lord Jesus Christ; that by His disciples the

Lord Jesus Christ is worshipped as God, and that in their souls His true disciples proclaim that He has worked wonders by His grace,—wonders as great as those which He once effected on the bodies of men.

You may reject the truth as it is in Jesus,—the Jews did so,—or you may admit and admire the wisdom of the Christian's God by reading the Scriptures, and yet refuse to receive Him as your Saviour and your God. The Jews said, "Never man spake as this man." As the Jews, approaching Him, were fed with loaves and fishes, so unbelievers, even now, approaching Him, gather crumbs of wisdom which fall from His table. The unbelieving world is bettered by the very fact that the gospel is manifested among them. All this you may do; or you may rage against the gospel and its professors, against the Church, which is the body of Christ, and against all that pertains to Christ, resorting to all the acts of the infidel and the artifices of the profane. So did the Jews; and where is their nation? and what have they become?

Their city, once the sacred city, has been destroyed; and, though rebuilt, is of cities no longer the queen. It is inhabited by a people strangers to their religion, and their whole land is in the possession of those who despise as well as hate them; they, though bearing in their physiognomy the peculiar features of their race, are wandering outcasts in every nation of the world. They are a standing miracle, preaching everywhere and showing how heavy the curse is upon those who, having had advantages conferred upon them, have despised or neglected to use them.

Let those to whom the gospel has been offered, and who have neglected to receive it in its fulness, learn from this what, unless they repent betimes, and turn unto the Lord, may be their fate hereafter.

They may say they cannot believe; they may use all the commonplaces on the subject with which we are familiar to justify their unbelief. The more the pity. Man comes into this world a lost creature. A Saviour is offered to him—only one; he rejects that Saviour.

The inference is apparent. He remains what he was. He came into this world under a curse; he remains as he was. He dies; he goes into the next world a worse sinner than he came into this. He goes on eternally sinning, and the consequence must be that he is eternally miserable. Now a Saviour is promised. We are told that, in the next world, such is not the case. Behold, now is the appointed time; now, only, is the day of salvation.

By rejecting the external manifestation of Christ, men preclude themselves from the internal manifestation. Unless God be manifested internally to the soul, the soul cannot be prepared for Heaven; and Heaven is a place prepared only for prepared souls.

Hence you see the importance of pressing the internal manifestation of God, or the truths of the gospel upon the souls of men.

But do you believe all the facts of revelation? or are you ready to do so as one by one they shall be made manifest to your mind? Are

you constant readers of the Bible? regular students of Scripture?

It is well. But unless there be also an inward manifestation of God, all will be in vain.

The disciples came to the Lord Jesus, saw Christ, conversed with Christ; but this did not suffice. It was expedient that He should go away, in order that He might come to them again in another manner, even in a spiritual manner, with the Father and the Holy Ghost.

And now, then, comes the question,—If there is to be this spiritual manifestation, how is it to be obtained?

My brethren, first of all there must be love on our part. "He that loveth Me," saith our Lord. There must be not merely faith to *believe*, there must be faith to *love*. My brethren, can there indeed be faith, can Christian faith exist, without love? The devils believe and tremble; the faith of Christians differs from the belief of devils, because of Christian faith love is an ingredient. Can we believe that, for us men, and for our salvation,

the eternal Son of the Father took upon Him our nature, and in that nature rendered that perfect obedience which could only be tested and proved by an accumulation of suffering which came down upon Him, wave upon wave, until all was finished by His death, and this for us? Can we believe that for us He, being incarnate, was delivered up to the Gentiles, and scourged and crucified? Can we believe this and not love—in gratitude and adoration love—that blessed and adorable Being, whose own love to us surpasseth knowledge?

Oh! if you do not love the Lord Jesus, you do *not* believe. If you believe, you *must* love. We should be brute beasts, not human beings, if we did not love such a Benefactor as this, if we know Him to be such.

Faith and love are, then, nearly synonymous terms,—nearly, my brethren, but not quite; for, at the beginning, faith may be, and often is, without love; we may begin with trembling, and so consult the Scriptures; but, before faith can be called Christian faith, it must be undistinguishable from love.

Read the Bible; read it with prayer; read it with attention; study it; read orthodox books, which throw light upon its history. Do not perplex yourself by trying directly to stir up your feelings,—to make yourself love. No; that is not the natural way of proceeding. If your friend was sick, you would not be perplexing yourself to ascertain whether you grieved sufficiently,—whether you were sufficiently affected and afflicted. No; you would go to him and you would nurse him, and you would watch him and minister to his wants, and then, when you should see his sufferings, your feelings would be sufficiently roused,—sufficiently, for many differ, some feel more deeply than others, not all persons in the same degree; but all sufficiently, as much as would, according to their temperament, be natural to them.

And so we say, study your Bible. Realise to your mind the facts of revelation, picture to yourself the awful realities; and then, if you have the heart of a human being, you must be touched and moved.

But what! Is the mere sentimentalist safe? Is he safe who is moved on reading the sacred narrative, as he might be affected at a tale of fiction?

No, my brethren; our All-wise Master guards against this. There are many sentimental religionists, many whose religion is a mere romance—many great talkers of religion, who are talkers only; and our Divine Teacher guards us against this error in the 23d verse of this chapter. "If a man love Me," saith the Lord Jesus, "he will keep My words;" which is only repeating what He saith in the 15th verse: "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

To guard against the self-deceiver, it is necessary to give this warning; or else the fact is implied in the very nature of love. You, as a matter of course, like to do what you know will give satisfaction to the person you really love; and you abstain from doing what you know will annoy him; you will try to ascertain his wishes on all points, for, although you may be unable to benefit him, you will always wish to please him. How does a parent strive

to do what will tend to his child's eventual welfare! how does a loving child strive to show, by little attentions, that he is grateful for an aged parent's love!

So, when you love the Lord Jesus Christ, you will study the Scriptures, not only to impress upon your mind all the excellence of His adorable character, but also to hearken to His words, to receive His commandments, to ascertain His will, and to be able to evince your love by trying to do whatever may be well-pleasing in His sight.

Now, it is when your soul is in this position that you shall be loved of the Father, reconciled to you by the blood of the Lamb; and Christ our Lord shall, by His Spirit, manifest Himself internally to you.

"If a man love Me," saith our Lord in the 23d verse, already quoted, "he will keep My words; and My Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

Yes! this shall be, for, in behalf of such, the all-prevailing Intercessor is ever praying;

and we find, in another chapter, "That they may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us. . . . I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be perfect in one." [1]

Yes! the Father is in that man's soul, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost—even God, even the blessed Trinity; the Son as Mediator, the Father creating it anew; the Holy Ghost sanctifying it.

Of the Holy Ghost there is an external manifestation, as well as an internal.

To the disciples our Lord said, in the 17th verse of this chapter, speaking of the Holy Ghost, before that coming of Him to their souls which was to be the effect of our Lord's departure, the result of His atoning sacrifice and all-prevailing intercession, "Ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you." This He did even then. "He dwelleth with you;" and then He adds, "and He shall be in you," proceeding from the Father and the Son, yet One with them. When God is present, the Holy Ghost

[1] St. John xvii. 21-23.

is present; and when the Spiritual presence of God is promised, that promise includes the Spirit of God, through whom the Divine presence is effected.

The Holy Ghost is *with* us, before He is *in* us. He was in the world before the coming of our Lord, and the world was made by Him; He was with the prophets. Were the prophets inspired? "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."[1] Without Him nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Were the weak strengthened? Were men born in original sin enabled to work righteousness? It was by the power of the Holy Ghost. To His inspirations we trace the wisdom of the heathens—that Socrates, and Plato, and the ancient authors were, in a measure, wiser than others, is to be attributed to the Holy Ghost preparing the heathen world, as well as the Hebrew world, for our Lord's coming.

But there was within, whether Jew or Gentile, no such indwelling of the Spirit as that which makes the Christian a new creature; a

[1] 2 St. Peter i. 21.

Paul so much superior to a David. This may be seen by reference to another chapter of this Gospel of St. John. "He that believeth on Me," saith our Lord, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water;" and, adds the evangelist, "This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified;"[1] this giving of the Spirit being dependent upon the glorification of the God-Man.

Now this indwelling of God, the blessed Trinity, this union and communion with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost is to be sought for.

The external manifestation of the gospel is, as I have said, forced upon us by the providence of God. Whether we will accept it or not, we cannot but know that God has made known His gospel to the world. And we cannot help it, but that if we neglect or reject so great salvation, perish we must.

But the internal manifestation must be

[1] St. John vii. 38, 39.

sought, it will *not* be forced upon us. They who have received the external blessing must seek the internal.

And we must seek it, how? By ceasing to do evil, and by learning to do well, by endeavouring, however imperfectly, still by endeavouring to keep the law of God, as made known to us by His Scriptures, the external manifestation.

While thus we are striving to avail ourselves of the external advantages placed by Divine providence within our reach, the Holy Ghost will be with us, and He it is who will shed the love of God abroad in your hearts.

And when we love God, we are loved of the Father and of the Son, and with the Father and the Son, the Holy Ghost dwelleth in us. There will be the internal manifestation by the *grace* of God, corresponding with the external manifestation, which is by the *providence* of God.

Now, my brethren, are we—let us put it to our hearts and consciences—are we availing ourselves of the external advantages already

given, in order that we may secure to ourselves the spiritual blessings promised? blessings, the reality of which most men doubt, and treat as an enthusiasm, until they have experienced them.

Let us recount briefly some of the blessings which pertain to those in whom God, the blessed Trinity, hath taken up His abode, in whom He is manifested; or, in other words, to those who are converted, turned to God by the Spirit of God, and are in a state of sanctification.

First of all, in those in whom the Holy Trinity abideth, love is of a more exalted character and of more disinterested nature than in others.

The apostles loved before the *internal* coming of our Lord; but their love, though sufficient to bring them to the Lord Jesus, was nevertheless defective.

We find our Lord reproving the apostles in the 28th verse of this chapter. "Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved Me—as much as ye ought to do—ye would re-

joice, because I said, I go unto the Father." Man as well as God, my human nature is now in a state of humiliation—I take it to my Father; then I shall be glorified—I, the God-man—with that glory which I had before I united my Divine nature with the human: in this my glory ye would rejoice, if your love were what Christian love ought to be.

And wherein was it deficient? Their love was not yet disinterested; self was still in all their thoughts, their own hapless and helpless state, their own sorrow and calamity, when deprived of Him who had been their joy, their comfort, and their support. *This*, not the glory of their Master, was what they thought of.

We can understand, even from worldly love, love to the creature, what their love ought to have been.

Suppose that a parent, an aged parent, received intelligence that her son had obtained an appointment in some distant land, a high and honourable office, where a career of usefulness and glory would be opened before him.

Would that parent endeavour to prevent

her son from accepting it, because the pang of parting with him—a parting which her age would probably render a final one—would be unbearable? Would she say, "No; you must not leave me; you must stay to be the support of my declining years, to comfort me in my old age, and to close my eyes at death"?

If she should act thus, her love would scarcely deserve the name of love; it would be purely selfish.

Disinterested love would say, "Go, my child; enter upon the bright career of usefulness which is before you, and when I hear of your happiness, your usefulness in time, though I shall see you no more in the flesh, I shall have my share of bliss, and you will be sure of my sympathy, and we shall meet *there*, where those who meet will part no more."

This would be said; ay, while tears, bitter tears at parting, would be shed, tears which would tell how deep the pang of separation, how real the sacrifice would be; the cutting off of the right hand, the plucking out of the right eye, for the body's welfare.

Such *should* have been the love of the apostles. Sorrow might have been in their heart; but that sorrow should have been tempered by the joy of knowing that their Lord was going into glory.

And, oh! my brethren, may we never rest contented until love such as this be realised in our souls; until our Master's glory be our first concern. Oh, let us cry unto Him daily, constantly, for love that will make us willing to spend and be spent in His service, to submit to reproach, to endure wrong, yea, to do, to suffer anything for *His* glory, through the salvation of men; yea, for His sake, if need shall be, to die.

So was it with the apostles when love was perfected in them; for the Lord they did then, indeed, give up all things; for His glory they were ready to die, ay, and they died.

So will it be with us when faith has in us its perfect work.

When there is a manifestation of God to our souls, then is there a hatred, a detestation, an abhorrence of sin. Never let us rest, my

brethren, until, by the indwelling of God, this is effected in us.

Every converted man leaves off sinning; that is to say, sinning wilfully, for in one sense we sin all to our dying hour. It is a proof that we have drawn nigh unto God, and that God has drawn nigh unto us, that we resist sin.

But how many there are who still love sin, ay, long after they have ceased to commit it! How many to whom sin has still a fascination, which makes their prayer "Lead us not into temptation," peculiarly emphatic.

Ah! my brethren, we are never safe until we loath sin, until we feel for it as we should feel at the sight of some disgusting reptile.

Let us ever pray that by the indwelling of God this abhorrence of sin may be effected in us.

"When the Comforter cometh," saith our Lord, in the 26th verse, "which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."

Yes, there will be a constant recollection of

the truths of the gospel, and the duties of a Christian profession will be brought before us, will be suggested to us, at the very time when they are required, by God the Holy Ghost, when through the mediation of God the Son, the Father reigneth in our souls.

And there will be peace within. The reign of God is a reign of peace.

"Peace," saith our Lord, in the 27th verse, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you:" peace, that peace which He Himself enjoyed, though all around was turmoil, confusion, persecution, misery, and death; peace with God the Father, through God the Son, who is our Peace-maker, as one with God; peace, that peace which is effected in us by God the Holy Ghost when He renders us independent of external circumstances—the peace effected by the blood of the Cross; the peace effected by those good gifts which He who hath led captivity captive hath obtained for man.

Peace on earth, which will become glory when, at the last day, we shall stand forth a

people in whom God's mercy is manifested, before the throne of Him whose glory will be still manifested around us, and in us, and by us, an ever-increasing manifestation in all eternity.

Seek to love him; and for this purpose dwell deeply, sincerely, sadly, on the whole plan of salvation laid before us in Holy Scripture.

It is through Jesus, our elder brother, that we are to love God. God became man, and being man, is an object of man's love. Dwell on all the details of His suffering, when He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, when He was stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted; when He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities, when the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we were healed.

And then hear once more His gracious promise: "He that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him. If a man love Me, he will keep My words and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."

THE HOLY GHOST.

"He said unto them, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost."

ACTS xix. 2.

SINCE ye believed—believed what? Believed, of course, that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah, the long-expected Redeemer of mankind.

This they believed, for these disciples of Ephesus were the disciples of John the Baptist, and not only had John the Baptist designated the Lord Jesus as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world," he had also declared that, at the baptism of our Lord, "he had seen the heavens opened, and the Spirit of the Lord descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him."

It was not, then, with reference to the existence of the Holy Spirit that the disciples of John gave the answer in our text; but they had not heard whether this was, by the coming

of the Holy Ghost, as yet accomplished. The Paraclete, the more than Advocate—the Paraclete, the more than Comforter—is, we must remember, called the Holy Ghost, not because He is God, for, in reference to His Godhead, such a designation would be superfluous. Of the spirituality of God there is no doubt; and they who do not predicate holiness of their Deity, are worshippers not of God, but of the devil.

The Holy Ghost is a title of office. In the scheme of redemption, the second Person in the Godhead became incarnate. That He might make the atonement, a body was prepared for Him; but flesh and blood such as the Lord Jesus had, the third Person in the Godhead did not require, when to render men meet for the Heaven opened to us by our Redeemer's blood. He took upon Him the office of the Paraclete. A spirit He remains, and He is called the Holy Spirit, because His office it is to make holy those among men who have recourse to the means of grace.

He hath come, the teacher of the Church, teaching the Church through those sacred

Scriptures which He, at divers times and in sundry manners, inspired the prophets to write and the apostles to complete; and the teacher He is, not only of the Church at large, but of each individual soul.

His work of inspiration continues, and for His inspiration we are taught to pray; to Him we are instructed to attribute "all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works."

That man is no fanatic who expects what he prays for, the promised inspiration of God the Holy Ghost; the fanatic is he who imagines that he possesses more than the Holy Spirit has promised to impart.

The Holy Ghost inspired men under the Mosaic dispensation from time to time, to add new articles to the Creed, and He made known to them new truths in confirmation of revelations previously vouchsafed.

But to the Christian Church He hath given what the Patriarchal and the Levitical Church had not—a completed Bible—a Bible to which we may not, under any pretence of inspiration, add, and from which we may not take away.

To a Church with a completed Bible no new revelation of facts will be made, until that dispensation shall have been brought to its close by the coming of Him, for whose coming the whole world is, through science, unconsciously making preparation.

But though facts may remain the same, the power to discriminate them may vary in different individuals. Two persons may be gazing on the same landscape, they look upon the same things, yet of those things some may be clearly seen by one which are dimly perceived by the other; what one sees to be of importance the other may scarcely observe, because the one has used, and the other has not, that telescope which is offered to both.

We do not, then, contradict ourselves when we say that, although new facts are not to be revealed to the Church, yet, by the inspiration of God the Holy Ghost, facts may be brought home as new revelations to the soul of the praying believer.

The majesty of the eternal God and the spirituality of His holy law; the corruption of

human nature and the exceeding sinfulness of sin, which deserves an infinite punishment, or requires an infinite atonement;—these are facts patent on the very surface of Scripture, and yet upon how many, during some portion of their life, upon how many who do not deny them, do these undenied facts fail to exercise that influential power which is the result of faith, as distinguished from mere belief.

Belief becomes faith through the mighty operations of God the Holy Ghost upon the soul which He sanctifies. The dogma which inflames the passions of the mere controversialist becomes, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, a life-giving reality; and when the Lord Jesus stands revealed in Scripture, a Saviour almighty to save, the converted heart falls prostrate before Him, saying, "My Lord and my God."

Some, when we say this, may be tempted to exclaim, Ah, Lord, doth he not speak parables? but the experience of others will bear witness that we are only speaking the words of soberness and truth. They can tell of holy resolu-

tions, of heavenly aspirations, of good thoughts arising, as it were, spontaneously in their sinful souls, of consolatory reflections, or strengthening hopes coming to them, unevoked, unexpected, suddenly, even when the heart has repelled consolation from human lips, or when the friendly adviser has spoken in vain; and such persons recognise in themselves the indwelling of that ever blessed Spirit who, abiding in the Church, makes of every soul which is opened to receive Him a temple of God. Or by chance the subject is selected by the preacher, and it is ably handled in the pulpit; or by chance a friend drops in who is mighty in the Scriptures. Or, again, you may happen to be in doubt as to some course of conduct to be pursued, and by chance you meet the very person qualified, by his experience, to act as your adviser; or, again, you may be very sad at heart, inclined to despond and despair, and lo! by chance you light upon a passage in Scripture, which at once speaks comfort to your afflicted soul, and brings assurance to the heart.

Or, once more, you are in deep distress, penitent over debts dishonestly contracted, or unable to realise the competence without which you must sink from intellectual to manual labour, and by chance an unexpected friend appears, a good Samaritan, who lends a helping hand, and opens his purse to relieve your wants.

But, my brethren, there is no such thing as chance. The word is used when something has occurred unexpectedly, or in an unlooked for manner. But he uses the word wrongly who believes in the Providence of God. By the Providence of God, all things are ordered, though that order may be undiscoverable by the unaided intellect of the natural man.

O my brethren, grieve not the Holy Spirit by shutting the mental eye, but rather open the heart to perceive in the ever-present God the cause and the donor of the blessing.

The hand of charity, it was opened by the Spirit of Christ. The voice which utters the word is the voice of man, but it is the Holy Spirit who wings it to the soul. He brings the

relief, the comfort, and the counsel. He sent the friend. He inspired the preacher. He opened the book. He employed in your favour the voice of eloquence and the mind of genius. The friend, the preacher, the writer, they knew not what they did; but the eye of faith sees that they were the willing agents of the Holy Spirit, who, first inspiring them, then employed them as His mouth, or as the pen in His hand.

How absolutely necessary is this individual application of what has been done for all, a very little consideration will serve to show.

Of the progress which has been made in science, if not in art, in all that can conduce to the material comforts of life, or tend to intellectual excellence, we justly make a boast.

Invention seems to multiply invention, a greater produce is forced from the earth, and we exchange commodities with the antipodes. Attention is successfully paid to the means of prolonging life, and to the arts of destroying it.

But amidst all improvements, human nature alone remains unchanged and stationary. The

heart of man is—I am speaking of the natural, unrenewed, unsanctified man—unchanged and unchangeable. Vice may vary its forms; chivalry, in one age, may mitigate its ferocity, and civilisation, in another, may rob vice of its grossness; but there it is in the heart of man, that heart, always the same, as vain as proud, as hypocritical, as selfish, as lustful, as revengeful, as unrestrained in its malignant passions, as intolerant, as persecuting, as ever. Temperament and circumstances may repress some of the bad points, by giving prominence to others; but there it still is, as ungodly now, even in the most highly educated, as it has been since the days of Adam and of Cain—ever craving for the indulgence of its besetting sin, whatever that sin may be.

The surface of society may, at the present time, be smooth and calm. Calm and smooth it lay before the awful outbreak of the first Revolution in France; but what man is, when the barriers of the law are removed, and those conventionalities, the real value of which we are apt to overlook—this is clearly made

known by the Reign of Terror which, in one of the most highly civilised of nations, then ensued. Within a narrower sphere, the same fact is revealed to us by the conduct of our colonists in places where Government is not yet organised in its full authority, and where, the restraints of society and custom being removed, men, who were regarded as respectable in the mother country, act in open defiance of all the laws of God and of man. The ocean may be calm for a season; but the saline bitterness of every drop of which it is composed remains always the same.

In vain do the philanthropist and statesman and moralist combine to devise the means, and to carry those means into effect, for the amelioration of society. The same press which circulates the Scriptures is employed in propagating scandal, irreligion, and vice. The school may teach children to read; but the books most in demand are those which are opposed to religion and morality. You may erect new churches; but they are as nothing compared with the illuminated fanes of de-

bauchery and intemperance by which every town is profaned. As well may man expect, by adding wings to the human body, to take his pastime in the air, as to prevent the soul from sinking downwards, through its dotage, to that place in which, unless it be rescued by the outstretched arm of an Almighty Saviour, it will go on eternally sinning, and be, because eternally sinning, eternally miserable.

Such is the state of things in which the great God has, under the Christian dispensation, interposed; having not only sent a Saviour to render salvable the human race; but as a consequence of that atonement through which this blessed end was accomplished, the Holy Spirit also, to apply the merits of the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice once made upon the cross, to the salvation of individuals, by the regeneration of each individual's soul.

The Divine system is thus, though not opposed to, yet independent of, the human system. The moralist who acts independently of revelation, who is, consciously or unconsciously, therefore, an infidel moralist, says,

Improve society, and you will make the individual good. The word of God saith, Let the individual be sanctified; and if society be an aggregate of believers, society will become what it ought to be—then, but not till then.

Oh! the comfort of knowing that the Spirit of God is ever at hand, a governor to rule, a teacher to instruct, a friend to comfort, a mediator to intercede.

Those who are under grace receive, as I have said, something like a new sense, by which the invisible is rendered visible.

We live in an age of scientific pursuit. The professor of science tells us that, in this bright pellucid air which we inhale with our nostrils; in this transparent, atmospheric ocean which floats around us; in this air, this element apparently so simple, there exists a sort of laboratory, in which incessant actions are going on. He describes it as a sort of chemical vessel, in which every species of body is continually floating; from whence proceed, we are told, sublimations, separations, digestions, putrefactions, and other processes too numerous to mention.

Revelation, not intended to make us philosophers, does not mention these things, though they are implied: all that revelation does is to inform us, that among these things invisible, which philosophers tell us must exist in the atmosphere around us, there are also in existence things animate and spiritual—angels, the sanctities of heaven, and over these, as their ruler, God the Holy Ghost.

If these things were constantly present to our minds, we should be so overwhelmed as to be incapacitated for our duty to the world; but it is astonishing what an influence they have upon our general conduct, and our whole turn of thought if, in our meditative moments, we close our eyes and accustom ourselves to reflect that these things are really so.

Man—I make use, once again, of a simile which is very applicable—man may be compared, while in this world, to a bird in the shell. Within the shell the unhatched bird is fully formed; its parts, though undeveloped, are all prepared for its future state of existence.

When the shell is broken, then the bird, different, but still the same, emerges at once into that unknown world of beauty by which, though invisible, it has been all along surrounded. It rises to newness of life, its capacities beginning immediately to unfold themselves. Carry the idea a little farther. How slender the partition between the unhatched bird and that other world to which it was predestined, and for which it was formed in the shell! How near the mother bird, who, unseen, has imparted to it vitality and heat! And, my brethren, when the thin partition which separates us from the invisible world of glory around us shall have been dissolved by the hand of death, all our faculties will be developed to see what is now invisible, to hear the inaudible, and we shall understand how very near to us the Lord, the Giver of life, hath been; how He hath, as a dove, brooded over our souls; how it hath been under the shadow of His wings that our hearts have been vivified by grace, and made to glow with heavenly love.

At the same time, we must remember that

under the leadership of Satan, there are evil spirits around us; and of their existence we are conscious from the evil thoughts, malignant, or sensual, or infidel, which do from time to time rush across the mind, suggested as secretly as are the holy inspirations of the Holy Spirit.

And we are not only warned of this in Scripture, but we are also told that by not cherishing the holy inspirations, and by not repelling instantly the evil suggestions, we do despite unto the Spirit of God.

How the Spirit of God can be grieved we may not know; but this we *do* know, that He can and will act towards us, if we continue to do despite unto Him, as would act one of our fellow-creatures, if aggrieved. He may withdraw from us His holy influences. He may cease to speak to us. Though as God He liveth for ever, yet He may, as the Paraclete, be to us as though He were not. O my brethren, remember this awful thought — a man may, like Pharaoh, outlive the day of grace. Whenever the good thought occurs, let us remember,

brethren, that the Spirit of the living God is speaking to our heart. Whenever the conscience rebukes the careless for sins of omission, or reminds the impetuous of words said or of deeds done in the moment of excitement or irritation, which cause him, on reflection, almost, if not actually, to shriek out his remorse, the spiritual physician is then probing the soul. Whenever, in the midst of a perverse and gainsaying generation, which mistakes sarcasm for argument and persecutes with a sneer, the cowardly soul is tempted to deny the Saviour who died for its salvation—it is the Holy Spirit who calls upon the faltering Christian to add to his faith manliness, to "put his spiritual armour on." Whenever we see with our eyes, or with our ears hear of conduct which betokens a forbearing, a self-denying, an amiable, a gentle, a noble, generous, benevolent, disinterested disposition; whenever, in our meditative moments, we contemplate the life and ministry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to learn what, through the Holy Spirit, is God-like in man—it is the Holy

Ghost who fills the eye with tears of sympathy and admiration, who prompts the prayer, May I do likewise. And if, my brethren, with these aspirations you wait upon the Lord in all the means of grace; if, inwardly digesting the truth which the Holy Ghost inspired holy men to write, and inspired the Church to preserve and hand down to us, you are careful to stir up the gift which is in you, and to fan the flame within until it shall have consumed your iniquity and purified your soul; you will soon know of a surety that there is no joy on earth even remotely comparable to the joy of the Holy Ghost. You may be enthusiasts—and what good thing can without enthusiasm be accomplished?—but in the absence of malignity your enthusiasm will never degenerate into the sin of fanaticism. Often in this world of trial you will be in doubt, in distress, in danger, in want; but in every doubt the Spirit of wisdom will guide your way, in every distress the Spirit of love will comfort your heart, in every danger the Spirit of power will protect your soul, in every want the Spirit of grace

will supply your need, until, having transformed you into the perfect likeness of Christ, He shall present you faultless before the throne of glory.

THE SPIRIT AND THE BRIDE SAY, COME.

"I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

REVELATION xxii. 16, 17.

ONCE more has come round to us this sacred season; once more from heaven and from earth the call is raised for those who are neither hot nor cold, but worse than either, to the lukewarm, that they should come unto Him who had come in condescension indescribable to them.

"I take away the stony heart: I put a new heart within you, saith the Lord."

But indisputable as this fact is, if we then, in haste or perverseness, were to conclude that

because the Holy Ghost is God, and because God is almighty, no other agency in the work of conversion than this is required, we should certainly prove equally ignorant of Scripture, and devoid of all logical discernment.

Would it not be a mere mockery of our impotence, if God were to say "Come" to those who are unable to obey the call? Such invitation, of course, *implies* a power on our own part to say, I will not come. That if we come the Lord will affect that mighty change in our souls of which we stand in need—this is implied in the invitation; but because we are invited to come, it is also implied that to *compel* us to come is no part of God's design.

By the voice of conscience He calls us. By all the kindly affections of our nature He calls us. By an appeal to every generous feeling of the heart He calls us. He also in calling us employs human agency and the instrumentality of the Church.

Let us never forget, let us rejoice in the fact that the highest honour which the Creator has conferred upon His rational creation has

been to permit the reasonable creature to act as a fellow-worker with omnipotence. He does not stand in need of our assistance, and therefore, if under pretence that we desire to be useful, we transgress the Divine laws, we sin. While the great Captain of our salvation permits His army to go forth to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty, He does not need our assistance; but He honours us by employing us to effect His purposes.

In that very book from which our text is taken, it is, you will bear in mind, through a created angel that God speaks, thus doing honour to His rational creature by employing him in His service.

And it has pleased God in all things to influence man by human agency; even through the instrumentality of man, making known to man His sovereign will and His future intentions.

The Bible is the word of God. Through it the will of God is made known to man, and yet, how was the Bible composed?

It was not written, as the law was, on tables of stone by the finger of God. It is not graven, as with an iron pen, upon a rock to last for ever. It is not written, as with a sunbeam, on the sky, so that all the nations of the earth might read and believe.

But what has been done? "Holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost;" that is to say, the Holy Ghost employed men. He employed the memory of some, bringing to the remembrance of the apostles all that the Lord had spoken for the edification of His Church.

He employed the wisdom of Solomon in the Proverbs. The imagination of David in the Psalms. The lofty intellect of the prophets. The reasoning powers of St. Paul. He employed the mind of man, the tongue of man, the heart of man, the hand of man; and for the salvation of man, the everlasting truths of the gospel have been recorded by the pen of man, and have been preserved and handed down to us by the piety and the care of man.

In like manner, what man under inspiration

recorded—the Bible; what the spiritual bride has watched over with all the jealousy with which piety regards whatever emanates from God—man is commissioned, and commanded, and educated to explain, and enforce, and expound.

He who gave us the Bible incorporated a standing ministry, that the gospel might be not only read, but also preached. He made preaching to be an ordinance of His Church, and so a means of grace.

And the preacher is to go forth as the voice of the bride, the bride as well as the Spirit saying, Come—come unto Jesus—for pardon and for grace.

"The Spirit and the bride say, Come." There is one solemn cry from within and from without, and it saith, "Turn ye, turn ye: why will ye die?" Yes, my brethren, to those who have not come, our solemn question is, Why will ye die?

And this question reminds us that a third agency is required.

"Whosoever will," saith the Holy Ghost;

"whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." The preacher, by his arguments and appeals; the Spirit, by His Holy Scriptures and His secret suggestions to the soul, say, Come.

But on the part of him to whom the appeal is made there may be resistance, the resistance of some being by the mere *vis inertiæ*, by inactivity, sluggishness, indolence, supineness.

Man is so constituted by his Maker as to have the power, when any course of action is proposed to him, to determine and decide whether he will accept the advice and act on it, or not. He may say, I will, or I will not, when the Spirit and the bride have said, Come.

At the same time, man is not to forget that, although he has the control of his will, his volitions are nevertheless influenced by motives; and, therefore, to our motives much attention is due. Some strong counteracting motive must exist if a man shall refuse to attempt what it is obviously his interest to

do. Hence it is that it becomes important for us to consider not only what a man is invited *to*, but also what he is called *from*. When he refuses an invitation to draw near to the King of kings, if we would understand his conduct, we must seek to understand what motive existed to prevent his coming.

And what renders it expedient to notice this, is the fact that such exaggerated statements are sometimes made of the requirements of Scripture, that men cease to be Christians at all in the practical sense of the word, because they are called upon to attempt what they feel to be in their case impracticable; and because they have a just abhorrence of the meanest of all vices, hypocrisy, and the most dangerous of all follies, self-deception.

When our blessed Lord and Master Jesus Christ was yet on earth, there were, we know, many believers besides the twelve and the seventy. There were Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea, and others in the Sanhedrim. There were all those who had been objects of our Lord's miraculous power. There were,

after His resurrection, five hundred brethren who were permitted to see Him; and we cannot suppose that when He went about the villages of Galilee His preaching was without effect.

But out of all that number He required it only of twelve that they should forsake all in order that they might follow Him.

Believers in general were left to discharge privately and in secret the duties assigned to them by Providence—so privately that, except from a casual expression of St. Paul, of those five hundred brethren who were honoured by a vision of the risen Saviour before His ascension to glory, we should never have known.

To forsake all for his Saviour's sake is sometimes demanded of a Christian even now. A Christian man is sometimes obliged to forego some worldly advantage, rather than belie his principles or do violence to his conscience. We may regard in this point of view a man who, by an inscrutable providence, is reduced to poverty, deprived of the comforts of life, or bereaved of those most dear to his heart, if,

without a murmur, he accepts the dispensation as a blessing in disguise, and says, "It is the Lord: let Him do as seemeth unto Him good;" "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." The days may come ere long—for it is predicted that before our Lord's second coming there will be a falling away and a great persecution —the days may come when you will be called literally to forsake all from your love of Christ. But this is not the demand generally made on our contemporaries, except in the sense just explained. Nor without special reasons would it be just for us to retire from worldly advantages, because they are attended by great responsibilities. It is not for us to choose our own way of serving God. We are to serve Him by doing the duty, whether in prosperity or adversity, in sickness or in health, in poverty or wealth, of that station of life in which we have been placed, not by chance, but by the providence of God. What our hand findeth to do, then, that, that it is that we are to do with our might.

When the Spirit and the bride say, Come, you are not of necessity, therefore, called from the business of the world, or from those worldly advantages and enjoyments which business is undertaken to procure. If business be allowable, it is allowable also, within the prescribed boundaries, to enjoy the fruits of our industry.

And the object of Christianity being not only to bring salvation to individual souls, by persuading each one singly to drink of the water of life, which is freely offered to all, but also to regenerate the human species, and so to prepare the Church for the second coming of our Lord, whatsoever has a tendency to dignify, adorn, or elevate mankind must be regarded as a handmaid to religion; so that you are not called from poetry, from literature, from art, or from science, if by genius, education, or circumstances, you are led to devote the energies of your mind to any of these noble pursuits. We have left a large margin here, and therefore we may expect to be patiently heard when we remind you that when the Spirit and the bride say, Come, they

do call you from that absorption in worldly business which leaves you no time, no mind for high and holy thought on high and heavenly subjects—no time, no mind to reflect upon life and death, upon time and eternity, upon heaven and hell, upon salvation and a Saviour, upon damnation and Satan.

They do call you from the self-indulgent idleness which seeks only its own enjoyment, and finds neither time nor thought to devise plans and carry them into effect for the promotion of the glory of God, and the interests, temporal and spiritual, of our fellow-creatures.

They do call you from the easy-chair, where frivolous thoughts or idle conversation dissipate the soul, to this sacred place, the church of God, where, with angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven, we may hear of God and His wondrous work, and seek a work of wonder in the conversion and sanctification of our souls.

When the Spirit and the bride say, Come, though they do not call us from friendly inter-

course with our kind, yet they *do* call upon us, when wit is degenerating into licentiousness, or when witlings utter their commonplace innuendoes and sarcasms against all that is lovely in sentiment, high in principle, and holy in religion — then to add manliness to our faith, and either at once to retire in indignation, or if you possess the temper and are masters of your learning, to stand forth as the champion of Him who was reviled and buffeted, and spit upon and blasphemed for us.

You are not called from your office, your laboratory, your study, your studio, the warehouse or the shop, your merchandise or your farm, your storehouse or your ship—for these are the battlefields where the fight of faith is to be fought. No, we grant it; but then, when Satan, in the shape of a human tempter, or, as may be, through some diabolical suggestion to the mind, allures you to the secret act of dishonesty or dishonour, to the commission of some act of vice which dares not face the light, then—oh, then, my brethren, listen to the Spirit speaking to you from within—remember what

the bride, speaking in times past through the voice of a dear loved parent or an honoured pastor, hath said—Come, tear yourself from the tempter, come; ay, come to Him who saith to the weary and heavy laden, "Come unto Me, and I will give you rest."

When the Spirit and the bride say, Come, they do not call us to eccentricities of conduct or canting phraseology, which only make hypocrisy conspicuous; but they do call us, mark this, from all falsehood, injustice, and oppression; from pride, covetousness, and hypocrisy; from the false balance, the deceitful weight, the fraudulent bargain, the adulteration of commodities; from all gluttony and drunkenness, from all uncleanness, lasciviousness, and lust; from dissipation, idleness, and folly.

And now, brethren, comes the question, To whom are we called?

We are called to Him who, in our text, describes Himself as the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star; to Him whose advent, whose appearance as such,

we commemorate. Come to Him, who is described as the root of David! yes, because, ere David was born, ere a creature had being, ere time began, He was the Word which was with God, the Word which was God, the eternal Son of the Father, the second Person in the one and unchangeable Godhead, the source of life and light, not only to David, representing the highest of the human race, but to angels and archangels, and all the hosts of heaven, whom He, the Word of God, commanded into existence. The root of David, yes, and yet the offspring of David; yes, the offspring of David, because when the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, when the eternal Son of the Father without ceasing to be God, became man also, it was in the house and lineage of David that He came.

But it is to our Lord's description of Himself, as the bright and morning star that I would especially direct your attention at this present time.

Here we revert to what has been already

said. God has assigned us work to do while we remain here.

And He who hath given us our work on earth has so constituted our nature as to render it impossible for us to do any work well unless we devote to it the energies of our minds; and in order that we may devote ourselves to the work our hand findeth to do—the work assigned to us by circumstances under which we are placed, not by chance, but by God's providence—He hath given to us worldly encouragements, and permits us to be influenced by worldly motives; and by the fact of His thus constituting us, He hath rendered it impossible for us to be incessantly occupied by spiritual thoughts and subjects — impossible for us to have constantly before our minds those facts of the invisible world on which, in our meditative and prayerful moments, we love to dwell.

A very little consideration will serve to show that this world would cease to be what it is designed to be, a state of probation, if the prospect of our future life were so clearly and vividly presented to our view as to pre-

vent any other subject from engaging our affections, interesting our minds, and exciting us to action.

This position is admirably illustrated by a French metaphysician. "I recollect," says M. de St. Pierre, "that on my return to France in a vessel which had been on a voyage to India, as soon as the sailors had perfectly distinguished the land of their native country, they became in a great measure incapable of attending to the business of the ship. Some looked at it wistfully, without the power of minding any other object; others dressed themselves in their best clothes, as if they had been going that moment to disembark; some talked to themselves, and others wept. As we approached, the disorder of their minds increased. As they had been absent several years, there was no end to their admiration of the hills, of the foliage of the trees, and even of the rocks that skirted the shore, covered over with seaweed and mosses. The church spires of the villages, which they distinguished at a distance up the country, and which they named one after

another, filled them with transports of delight. But when the vessel entered the port, and when they saw on the quays their friends—their fathers, their mothers, their wives, and their children—stretching forth their arms to them with tears of joy, and calling them by their names, it was no longer possible to retain a single man on board. They all sprang ashore, and it became necessary to employ another set of mariners to bring the vessel to her moorings."

What, then, would be the case were we indulged with a sensible discovery of those regions inhabited by those who are most dear to us, and who alone are worthy of our most sublime affections? All the laborious and vain solicitudes of a present life would come to an end, and the exit from this world to the other being in every man's power, the gulf would be quickly shot; but nature, or rather nature's God, has mercifully involved it in obscurity, and has planted doubt and apprehension to guard the passage.

My brethren, when we think of these things,

can we refrain from saying, "Blessed be the Lord our God" for everything; for what He conceals as well as for what He reveals; for what He takes away, as well as for what He gives. He ordereth all things for the good of them that love Him.

But, my brethren, though this be true, it is also true that when the mariner is floating without a compass on the pathless ocean, he requires the polar star to direct his course; and if by that star he is to move his helm, towards that star he must continually direct his eye.

Doubtless he has other duties to perform. He may have to direct how and when the sails shall be set or furled; he will have to look from the heavens to the rudder; he will have to refresh his wearied nature, sometimes by food and sometimes by sleep; but still the port he will never reach, unless his eye be raised from time to the heavens above him—unless, looking up from the helm, he turns it according to the guiding of the star.

Precisely so, my brethren, in the voyage of

life. We are launched, as it were, on a troublous ocean. Many duties, sometimes conflicting duties, must occupy our attention and thoughts. Therefore, our eye must be fixed upon the Lord Jesus Christ, the star which shines in all the brightness of the Deity; we must look to His guidance by studying the sacred Scriptures, so that we may steer our course according to the principles which for our direction and guidance are there revealed.

To this we are called by the Spirit and the bride.

But the Lord Jesus Christ is not only the bright and polar star, He is also our morning star.

They to whom the Scriptures were first addressed, clearly understood the importance of this addition to the description thus figuratively given of our Lord's office.

They knew the perils which awaited the wanderer in the wilderness, the wilderness as pathless as the ocean. When the wayfarer wandering by night in the wilderness was unable to find his path, when the wild beasts are

howling and prowling around him, when his fear is that his next step may be into the pit-fall—how great is his joy when, lifting up his eye, he sees dawning in the firmament the morning star, the harbinger of day?

It assures him that light and safety are at hand, the light every moment increasing as he looks more intently upwards.

In like manner, my brethren, we are to look to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What for?

Is it that we may obtain bliss beyond the grave?

Ay, my brethren. He who is the root and offspring of David, He who is the bright and the morning star, He who came down from the Majesty on high to die for our sins—He hath risen from the dead, He hath gone up on high. He is even now preparing for them that love Him bliss such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor mind of man conceived.

Yes; but this is not all; "for godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come;" it is not only

heaven in reversion, it is also happiness in hand.

As far as worldly prospects are concerned, there are clouds and thick darkness at the end of every vista, unless it be illumined by a ray from heaven—a grave first for much that is dear to the heart, and then a grave for ourselves.

But if, when the Spirit and the bride say, Come, he that heareth, having already obeyed the call by forsaking sin, shall from the heart say further still, Come Lord Jesus, come in all Thy saving graces to my soul, there will be in that soul a very heaven upon earth—not, indeed, exemption from suffering, for all in this world of preparation and trial must, like our Lord and Master, suffer—but salvation from misery even here. There will be a tranquillity of mind, a humility, a sincerity, a calmness, a peace, a confidence, which, while death is disarmed of its sting and the grave of its victory, will gave stability to the pursuits, and zest to the enjoyments, of life. The only really happy man is the righteous man, to whom the Lord Jesus Christ is the bright and the morning star.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. His blood can cleanse from all sin. His righteousness can justify every soul. His Spirit can renew every heart. His grace can sanctify every life. His merits can open heaven to all believers.

Come to repose on the mercy of God in Christ. Come to enjoy that peace of God which passeth all understanding.

Come to Him who standeth at the right hand of God, that He may welcome *to* heaven all who have been by the sanctifying graces of His Spirit prepared *for* heaven.

Come to Him by a living faith. Come to Him by repentance. Come to Him through the means of grace. Come to Him by a holy and religious life.

The Spirit and the bride say, Come. O may each one here present say, The Lord being my helper, I will come.

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